

# COLLECTED POEMS

1929-1933

TRANSITIONAL POEM  
FROM FEATHERS TO IRON  
THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN

*by C. Day Lewis*



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# TRANSITIONAL POEM

*This work is dedicated to*

R E WARNER



## PART I

Ira brevis, longa est pietas, recidiva voluptas,  
Et cum posse perit, mens tamen una manet

MAXIMIAN





NOW I have come to reason  
And cast my schoolboy clout,  
Disorder I see is without,  
And the mind must sweat a poison  
Keener than Thessaly's brew,  
A pus that, discharged not thence,  
Gangrenes the vital sense  
And makes disorder true  
It is certain we shall attain  
No life till we stamp on all  
Life the tetragonal  
Pure symmetry of brain

I felt, in my scorning  
Of common poet's talk,  
As arrogant as the hawk  
When he mounts above the morning  
"Behold man's droll appearance,  
Faith wriggling upon his hooks,  
Chin-deep in Eternal Flux  
Angling for reassurance!"  
I care not if he retorts—  
"Of all that labour and wive  
And worship, who would give  
A fiddlestick for these thoughts  
That sluggishly yaw and bend,  
Fat strings of barges drawn  
By a tug they have never seen  
And never will comprehend?"

I sit in a wood and stare  
Up at untroubled branches  
Locked together and staunch as

Though girders of the air  
And think, the first wind rising  
Will crack that intricate crown  
And let the daylight down  
But there is naught surprising  
Can explode the single mind —  
Let figs from thistles fall  
Or stars from their pedestal,  
This architecture will stand

## 2

Come, soul, let us not fight  
Like cynical Chinees  
Beneath umbrella, nor wish to trade  
Upon neutrality  
For the mind must cope with  
All elements or none—  
Bask in dust along with weevils,  
Or criticise the sun

Look, where cloud squadrons are  
Stampeded by the wind,  
A boy's kite sits as calm as Minos  
If the string be sound  
But if there are no hands  
To keep the cable tense  
And no eyes to mark a flaw in it,  
What use the difference  
Between a gust that twitters  
Along the wainscot at dawn  
And a burly wind playing the zany  
In fields of barleycorn?

The time has gone when we  
Could sprawl at ease between  
Light and darkness, and deduce  
Omnipotence from our Mean  
For us the gregorian  
Example of those eyes  
That risked hell's blight and heaven's blinding  
But dared not compromise

## 3

That afternoon we lay on Lillington Common  
The land wallowed around us in the sunlight,  
But finding all things my strenuous sense included  
Ciphers new-copied by the indefinite sunlight,  
I fell once more under the shadow of my Sphinx  
The aimlessness of buttercup and beetle  
So pestered me, I would have cried surrender  
To the fossil certitudes of Tom, Dick, and Harry,  
Had I known how or believed that such a surrender  
Could fashion aught but a dead Sphinx from the live Sphinx

Later we lit a fire, and the hedge of darkness—  
Garnished with not a nightingale nor a glow-worm—  
Sprang up like the beanstalk by which our Jack aspired once  
Then, though each star seemed little as a glow-worm  
Perched on Leviathan's flank, and equally terrible  
My tenure of this plateau that sloped on all sides  
Into annihilation—yet was I lord of  
Something for, seeing the fall of a burnt-out faggot  
Make all the night sag down, I became lord of  
Light's interplay—stoker of an old parable

## 4

Come up, Methuselah,  
You doddering superman!  
Give me an instant realized  
And I'll outdo your span

In that one moment of evening  
When roses are most red  
I can fold back the firmament,  
I can put time to bed

Abraham, stint your tally  
Of concubines and cattle!  
Give place to me—capitalist  
In more intrinsic metal

I have a lover of flesh  
And a lover that is a sprite  
To-day I lie down with finite,  
To-morrow with infinite

That one is a constant  
And suffers no eclipse,  
Though I feel sun and moon burning  
Together on her lips

This one is a constant,  
But she's not kind at all,  
She raddles her gown with my despairs  
And pants her lip with gall.

My lover of flesh is wild,  
And willing to kiss again,  
She is the potency of earth  
When woods exhale the rain

My lover of air, like Artemis  
Spectrally embraced,  
Shuns the daylight that twists her smile  
To mineral distaste

Twin poles energetic, they  
Stand fast and generate  
This spark that crackles in the void  
As between fate and fate

## 5

My love is a tower  
Standing up in her  
I parley with planets  
And the casual wind  
Arcturus may grind  
Against our wall —he whets  
A tropic appetite,  
And decorates our night  
“What happier place  
For Johnny Head-in-Air,  
Who never would hear  
Time mumbling at the base?”

I will not hear, for she's  
My real Antipodes,  
And our ingrowing loves

Shall meet below earth's spine  
 And there shall intertwine,  
 Though Babel falls above  
 Time, we allow, destroys  
 All aerial toys  
 But to assail love's heart  
 He has no strategy,  
 Unless he suck up the sea  
 And pull the earth apart

## 6

Dismayed by the monstrous credibility  
 Of all antinomies, I climbed the fells  
 To Easedale Tarn Could I be child again  
 And grip those skirts of cloud the matriarch sky  
 Draggled on mere and hillside? ("So the dog  
 Returns to his vomit," you protest Well only  
 The dog can tell what virtue lies in his vomit )

Sleep on, you fells and profound dales there's no  
 Material wind or rain can insulate  
 The mind against its own forked speculation,  
 When once that storm sets in and then the flash  
 That bleakly enlightens a few sour acres leaves but  
 A more Egyptian darkness whence it came

Mountains are the musicians, they despise  
 Their audience but the wind is a popular preacher  
 And takes more from his audience than he gives them  
 How can I wear the clouds, who feel each mountain  
 Yearn from its flinty marrow to abdicate  
 Sublimity and globe-trot with the wind?

By Easedale Tarn, where I sought a comforter,  
 I found a gospel sterner than repentance

Prophetic earth, you need no lumber of logic  
Who point your arguments alike with a primrose  
And a sick sheep coughing among the stones  
And I have only words, yet must they both  
Outsoar the mountain and lap up the wind

## 7

Few things can more inflame  
This far too combative heart  
Than the intellectual Quixotes of the age  
Prattling of abstract art.

No one would deny it—  
But for a blind man's passion  
Cassandra had been no more than a draggle-skirt,  
Helen a ten-year fashion  
Yet had there not been one hostess  
Ever whose arms waylaid  
Like the tough bramble a princeling's journey, or  
At the least no peasant maid  
Redressing with rude heat  
Nature's primeval wrong,  
Epic had slumbered on beneath his blindness  
And Helen lacked her song

(So the antique balloon  
Wobbles with no defence  
Against the void but a grapnel that hops and ploughs  
Through the landscape of sense )

Phrase-making, dress-making—  
Distinction's hard to find,

For thought must play the mannequin, strut in phrase,  
Or gape with the ruck and mind,  
Like body, from covering gets  
Most adequate display  
Yet time trundles this one to the rag-and-bone man,  
While that other may  
Reverberate all along  
Man's craggy circumstance—  
Naked enough to keep its dignity  
Though it eye God askance



## PART II

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then, I contradict myself,  
I am large, I contain multitudes

W. WHITMAN

IT IS becoming now to declare my allegiance,  
To dig some reservoir for my springtime's pain,  
Bewilderment and pride, before their insurgence  
Is all sopped up in this dry regimen.

Laughable dwarfs, you may twirl and tweak my heart,—  
Have I not fought with Anakim at the crossways?  
Once I was Cicero, though pedant fate  
Now bids me learn the grammar of my days

These, then, have my allegiance, they whose shining  
Convicted my false dawn of flagrant night,  
Yet ushered up the sun, as poets leaning  
Upon a straw surmise the infinite

You, first, who ground my lust to love upon  
Your gritty humorous virginity,  
Then yielding to its temper suddenly  
Proved what a Danube can be struck from stone.  
With you I ran the gauntlet for my prime,  
Then living in the moment lived for all time.

Next the hawk-faced man, who could praise an apple  
In terms of peach and win the argument. Quick  
Was he to trip the shambling rhetoric  
Of laws and lions yet abstract turned the tables  
And his mind, almost, with a whiff of air  
Clothed first in a woman and after in a nightmare

She next, sorrow's familiar, who turned  
Her darkness to our light, that "brazen leech"  
Alleviating the vain cosmic itch

With fact coated in formul lest it burned  
Our tongue She shall have portion in my praise,  
And live in me, not memory, for always.

Last the tow-haired poet, never done  
With cutting and planing some new gnomie prop  
To jack his all too stable universe up —  
Conduct's Old Dobbin, thought's chameleon  
Single mind copes with split intelligence,  
Breeding a piebald strain of truth and nonsense

These have I loved and chosen, once being sure  
Some spacious vision waved upon their eyes  
That troubles not the common register,  
And love them still, knowing it otherwise

Knowing they held no mastership in wisdom  
Or wit save by certificate of my love,  
I have found out a better way to praise them—  
Nestor shall die and let Patroclus live

So I declare it These are they who built  
My house and never a stone of it laid agley.  
So cheat I memory that works in guilt  
And stucco to restore a fallen day

## 9

I thought to have had some fame  
As the village idiot  
Condemned at birth to sit  
Oracle of blind alleys  
Shanghaied aboard the galleys  
I got reprieve and shame

Tugging at his oar  
This idiot who, for lack  
Of the striped Zodiac,  
Swore that every planet  
Was truck, soon found some merit  
In his own abject star

Then there came disgust  
Of the former loon who could  
Elbow a bridge and brood  
From Chaos to last Trump  
Over the imbecile pomp  
Of waters dribbling past

For what can water be  
But so much less or more  
Gravamen to the oar?—  
(Reasons our reformed dunce)  
It is high time to renounce  
This village idiocy

## I O

How they would jeer at us—  
Ulysses, Herodotus,  
The hard-headed Phoenicians  
Or, of later nations,  
Columbus, the Pilgrim Fathers  
And a thousand others  
Who laboured only to find  
Some pittance of new ground,  
Merchandise or women

Those rude and bourgeois seamen  
Got glory thrown in  
As it were with every ton  
Of wave that swept their boat,  
And would have preferred a coat  
For keeping off the spray

Since the heroes lie  
Entombed with the recipe  
Of epic in their heart,  
And have buried—it seems—that art  
Of minding one's own business  
Magnanimously, for us  
There's nothing but to recant  
Ambition, and be content  
Like the poor child at play  
To find a holiday  
In the sticks and mud  
Of a familiar road

## I I

If I bricked up ambition and gave no air  
To the ancestral curse that gabbles there,  
I could leave wonder on the latch  
And with a whole heart watch  
The calm declension of an English year

I would be pædagog—hear poplar, lime  
And oak recite the seasons' paradigm  
Each year a dynasty would fall  
Within my orchard wall—  
I'd be their Tacitus, and they my time

Among those pippin princes I could ease  
 A heart long sick for some Hesperides  
     Plainsong of thrushes in the soul  
     Would drown that rigmarole  
 Of Eldorados, Auks, and Perilous Seas

(The God they cannot see sages define  
 In a slow-motion If I discipline  
     My flux into a background still  
     And sure as a waterfall  
 Will not a rainbow come of that routine? )

So circumscribe the vampire and he'll die soon—  
 Lunacy and anæmia take their own  
     Grounded in temperate soil I'll stay,  
     An orchard god, and say  
 My glow-worms hold a candle to the moon

## I 2

Enough There is no magic  
 Circle nor prophylactic  
 Sorcery of garlic  
 Will keep the vampire in  
 See!—that authentic  
 Original of sin  
 Slides from his cabin  
 Up to my sober trees  
 And spits disease  
 Thus infected, they  
 Start a sylvan rivalry,

Poplar and oak surpass  
Their natural green, and race  
Each other to the stars

Since my material  
Has chosen to rebel,  
It were most politic—  
Ere I also fall sick—  
To escape this Eden  
Indeed there has been no peace  
For any garden  
Or for any trees  
Since Priapus died,  
And lust can no more ride  
Over self-love and pride

Leave Eden to the brutes  
For he who lets his sap  
Run downward to the roots  
Will wither at the top  
And wear fool's-cap.  
I am no English lawn  
To build a smooth tradition  
Out of Time's recession  
And centuries of dew . .  
Adam must subdue  
The indestructible serpent,  
Outstaring it content  
If he can transplant  
One slip from paradise  
Into his own eyes

## I 3

Can the mole take  
A census of the stars?  
Our firmament will never  
Give him headache

The man who nuzzles  
In a woman's lap  
Burrows toward a night  
Too deep for puzzles

While he, whose prayer  
Holds up the starry system  
In a God's train, sees nothing  
Difficult there

So I, perhaps,  
Am neither mole nor mantis,  
I see the constellations,  
But by their gaps

## I 4

In heaven, I suppose, lie down together  
Agonised Pilate and the boa-constrictor  
That swallows anything but we must seize  
One horn or the other of our antitheses  
When I consider each independent star  
Wearing its world of darkness like a fur  
And rubbing shoulders with infinity,  
I am content experience should be  
More discontinuous than the points pricked  
Out by the mazy course of a derelict,



Iceberg, or Flying Dutchman, and the heart  
Stationary and passive as a chart  
In such star-frenzy I could boast, betwixt  
My yester and my morrow self are fixed  
All the birds carolling and all the seas  
Groaning from Greenwich to the Antipodes.

But an eccentric hour may come, when systems  
Not stars divide the dark, and then life's pistons  
Pounding into their secret cylinder  
Begin to tickle the most anchorite ear  
With hints of mechanisms that include  
The man And once that rhythm arrests the blood,  
Who would be satisfied his mind is no  
Continent but an archipelago?  
They are preposterous paladins and prance  
From myth to myth, who take an Agag stance  
Upon the needle points of here and now,  
Where only angels ought to tread Allow  
One jointure feasible to man, one state  
Squared with another—then he can integrate  
A million selves and where disorder ruled  
Straddle a chaos and beget a world.

Peals of the New Year once for me came tumbling  
Out of the narrow night like clusters of humming-  
Birds loosed from a black bag, and rose again  
Irresponsibly to silence but now I strain  
To follow them and see for miles around  
Men square or shrug their shoulders at the sound.  
Then I remember the pure and granite hills  
Where first I caught an ideal tone that stills,

Like the beloved's breath asleep, all din  
Of earth at traffic silence's first-born,  
Carrying over each sensual ravine  
To inform the seer and uniform the seen  
So from this ark, this closet of the brain,  
The dove emerges and flies back again  
With a Messiah sprig of certitude—  
Promise of ground below the sprawling flood

## I 5

Desire is a witch  
And runs against the clock  
It can unstitch  
The decent hem  
Where space tacks on to time  
It can unlock  
Pandora's privacies

It puffs in these  
Top-gallants of the mind,  
And away I stand  
On the elemental gale  
Into an ocean  
That the liar Lucian  
Had never dared retail

When my love leans with all  
Her shining breast and shoulder,  
I know she is older  
Than Ararat the hill,  
And yet more young  
Than the first daffodil  
That ever shews a spring

When her eyes delay  
On me, so deep are they  
Tunnelled by love, although  
You poured Atlantic  
In this one and Pacific  
In the other, I know  
They would not overflow

Desire clicks back  
Like cuckoo into clock,  
Leaves me to explain  
Eyes that a tear will drown  
And a body where youth  
Nor age will long remain  
To implicate the truth

It seems that we must call  
Anything truth whose well  
Is deep enough,  
For the essential  
Philosopher-stone, desire,  
Needs no other proof  
Than its own fire

## 16

Remembering how between  
Embrace and ultimate bone  
Always have interposed  
Strata undiagnosed  
In Love's geology,  
And even memory  
Is bullied by the flesh  
Out of its usual dish,

I railed upon desire,  
The silly self-betrayer  
Whose Cronic appetite  
Gobbles up all his brood,  
And I found, in body's despite,  
A moral to clinch the mood

They say that a mathematician  
Once fell to such a passion  
For  $x$  and  $y$ , he locked  
His door to keep outside  
Whatever might distract  
Him from his heavenly bride  
And presently died  
In the keenest of blisses  
With a dozen untasted dishes  
Outside his door.

O man,  
Feed Cronos with a stone.  
He's easily decoyed  
Who, perched on any throne,  
Happily gnaws the void

From this theoric tower  
Corn-land and city seem  
A lovely skiagram  
You could not guess what sour  
Contagion has outworn  
Those streets of men and corn  
Let body doubt the pure  
Shadow will re sure,

For shadow gives a free  
Licence to lunacy —  
And yet fools say it is  
The heart that's credulous  
For once, O sceptic heart,  
Will you not play your part?

## I 7

When nature plays hedge-schoolmaster,  
Shakes out the gaudy map of summer  
And shows me charabanc, rose, barley-ear  
And every bright-winged hummer,

He only would require of me  
To be the sponge of natural laws  
And learn no more of that cosmography  
Than passes through the pores

Why must I then unleash my brain  
To sweat after some revelation  
Behind the rose, heedless if truth maintain  
On the rose-bloom her station?

When bullying April bruised mine eyes  
With sleet-bound appetites and crude  
Experiments of green, I still w    wise  
And kissed the blossoming rod

Now summer brings what April took,  
Riding with fanfares from the south,  
And I should be no Solomon to look  
My Sheba in the mouth.

Charabancs shout along the lane  
And summer gales bay in the wood  
No less superbly because I can't explain  
What I have understood

Let logic analyse the hive,  
Wisdom's content to have the honey  
So I'll go bite the crust of things and thrive  
While hedgerows still are sunny

## PART III

But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of  
my being, do I myself still centrally disport  
in mute calm

HERMAN MELVILLE

ON MY right are trees and a lank stream sliding  
Impervious as Anaconda to the suns  
Of autumn, and the boughs are vipers writhing  
To slough the summer from their brittle bones  
Here is the Trojan meadow, here Scamander,  
And I, the counterfeit Achilles, feel  
A river-god surge up to tear me asunder,  
A serpent melancholy bruise my heel

On my left is the city famed for talk  
And tolerance Its old men run about  
Chasing reality, chasing the Auk  
With butterfly-nets Its young men swell the rout  
Gaping at Helen in the restaurant,  
Mocking at Helen from monastic towers  
Boy Achilles, who has known Helen too long  
To scold or worship, stands outside and glowers

Between the stream and city a rubbish heap  
Proclaims the pleasant norm with smouldering stench  
See! the pathetic pyre where Trojans keep  
Well out of sight the prey of time's revenges,  
Old butterfly-nets, couches where lovers lay—  
All furniture out of fashion So the fire  
Guts the proud champions of the real so Troy  
Cremates her dead selves and ascends to higher

Grecians awake, salute the happy norm!  
Now may Achilles find employment still,  
And once again the blood-lust will grow warm,  
Gloating on champions he could never kill



And if Scamander rears up and pursues,  
This ring of rubbish fire will baffle all  
His rage Hero, you're safe, in the purlieus  
Of God's infernal acre king and thrall

## 19

When April comes alive  
Out of the small bird's throat,  
Achilles in the sunshine  
Kept on his overcoat  
Trojan and Greek at battle,  
Helen wantoning—  
None but heroic metal  
Could ignore the spring

When honeysuckle and summer  
Suffocate the lane,  
That sulky boil was broken  
And I at last a man  
I'd have stripped off my skin to  
The impacts of hate and love—  
Rebel alone because I  
Could not be slave enough

Bodies now, not shadows,  
Intercept the sun  
It takes no rod to tell me  
That discipline's begun  
Seeking the fabled fusion  
From love's last chemical,  
I found the experiment  
Makes monads of us all,

For love still keeps apart,  
And all its vanities  
But emphasise higher heaven,  
As February trees  
When rooks begin their noisy  
Coronation of the wood  
Are turreted with folly  
Yet grow toward some good

I thought, since love can harness  
Pole with contrary pole,  
It must be earthed in darkness  
Deeper than mine or mole  
Now that I have loved  
A while and not gone blind,  
I think love's terminals  
Are fixed in fire and wind

## 20

How often, watching the windy boughs  
Juggle with the moon, or leaning  
My body against a wind  
That sets all earth careening,  
Or when I have seen flames browsing  
On the prairie of night and tossing  
Their muzzles up at Orion,  
Or the sun's hot arsenal spent  
On a cloud salient  
Till the air explodes with light,  
How often have I perceived a delight  
Which parallels the racing mind.  
But never rides it off the course

Another fire, another wind  
Now take the air, and I  
Am matched with a stricter ecstasy  
For he whom love and fear enlist  
To comb his universe  
For what Protagoras missed,  
Needs be reborn hermaphrodite  
And put himself out to nurse  
With a syren and a sibyl.  
So the spider gradually,  
Drawing fine systems from his belly,  
Includes creation with a thread  
And squats on the navel of his world  
Yet even that arch-fakir must feed  
Austerity on warm blood

The tracks of love and fear  
Lead back till I disappear  
Into that ample terminus  
From which all trains draw out  
Snorting towards an Ultima Thule  
Nothing is altered about  
The place, except its gloom is newly  
Lacquered by an unaccustomed eye,  
Yet cannot blunt mine eyes now  
To the clear finality  
Of all beginnings

Outside  
In the diamond air of day  
The engines simmer with delay,  
Desiring a steely discipline

No less, though now quite satisfied  
They travel a loop-line

## 2 I

My lover is so happy, you well might say  
One of the Hellene summers had lost its way  
And taken shelter underneath her breast  
None but its proper fear can now arrest  
Our meteoric love but still we grieve  
That curves of mind and body should outlive  
All expectation, and the heart become  
A blunt habitual arc, a pendulum  
Wagged by the ghost of its first impetus  
Love keeps the bogey slave to admonish us  
Of vanity, yet through this fear we scrawl  
Our sky with love's vain comets ere it fall

And then, up on High Stoy standing alone,  
We saw the excellence of the serious down  
That shakes the seasons from its back, and bears  
No obligation but to wind and stars  
What paroxysm of green can crack those huge  
Ribs grown from Chaos, stamped by the Deluge?

Later, within the wood sweetly reclining  
On bluebell and primrose, we loved, whose shining  
Made a poor fiction of the royal skies,  
But were to love alone repositories  
Of what by-product wonder it could spare  
From lips and eyes Yet nothing had such power  
As prattle of small flowers within the brake  
To mount the panic heart and rein it back

From the world's edge For they, whose virtue lies  
In a brief act of beauty, summarize  
Earth's annual passion and leave the naked earth  
Still dearer by their death than by their birth.  
So we, who are love's hemispheres hiding  
Beneath the coloured ordeal of our spring,  
Shall be disclosed, and I shall see your face  
An autumn evening certain of its peace

## 22

It is an easier thing  
To give up great possessions  
Than to forego one farthing  
Of the rare unpossessed

But I've been satellite  
Long enough to this moon,  
The pharisee of night  
Shining by tradition.

There's no star in the sky  
But gazing makes it double  
And the infatuate eye  
Can breed dilemmas on it

Wiser it were to sheath  
My burning heart in clay  
Than by this double breath  
To magnify the tomb.

I'd live like grass and trees,  
Familiar of the earth,

Proving its basalt peace  
Till I was unperturbed

By synod of the suns  
Or a moon's insolence  
As the ant when he runs  
Beneath sky-scraping grass

## 23

You've trafficked with no beast but unicorn  
Who dare hold me in scorn  
For my dilemmas Nor have you perceived  
The compass-point suggest  
An east by pointing to the west,  
Or you'd not call me thus deceived  
For fixing my desire  
On this magnetic north to gyre  
Under the sheer authority of ice

I have seen what impertinence  
Stokes up the dingy rhetoric of sense  
I've seen your subaltern ambitions rise  
Yellow and parallel  
As smoke from garden cities that soon fades  
In air it cannot even defile Poor shades,  
Not black enough for hell,  
Learn of this poplar which beyond its height  
Aspires not, and will bend beneath the thumb  
Of every wind, yet when the stars come  
It is an omen darker than the night

The rest may go No satisfaction lies  
In such And you alone shall hear  
My pride, whose love's the accurate frontier  
Of all my enterprise  
While your beauties' succession  
Holds my adventure in a flowery chain  
As the spring hedgerows hold the lane,  
How can I care whether it ends upon  
Marsh or metropolis?

But look within my heart, see there  
The tough stoic ghost of a pride was too severe  
To risk an armistice  
With lesser powers than death, but rather died  
Welcoming that iron in the soul  
Which keeps the spirit whole,  
Since none but ghosts are satisfied  
To see a glory passing and let it pass

For I had been a modern moth and hurled  
Myself on many a flaming world,  
To find its globe was glass  
In you alone  
I met the naked light, by you became  
Veteran of a flame  
That burns away all but the warrior bone  
And I shall know, if time should falsify  
This star the company of my night,  
Mine is the heron's flight  
Which makes a solitude of any sky





Let cactus spring where hermits go to bed  
With those they come to kill  
Three-legged I ran with that importunate curse,  
Till I guessed (in the sexual trance  
Or playing darts with drunken schoolmasters)  
The integrity that's laid bare  
Upon the edge of common furniture  
Now to the town returning  
I accept the blind collisions that ensure  
Soul's ektogenesis.

## 25

Where is the true, the central stone  
That clay and vapour zone,  
That earthquakes budge nor vinegar bites away,  
That rivets man against Doomsday?

You will not find it there, although  
You sink a shaft below  
Despair and see the roots of death close-curved  
About the kernel of your world.

Where is the invaluable star  
Whose beams enlaced are  
The scaffolding of truth, whose stages drawn  
Aside unshutter an ideal dawn?

It is well hid. You would not find  
It there, though far you mined  
Up through the golden seams that cram the night  
And walked those galleries of light

Above, below, the Flux tight-packed  
Stages its sexual act—  
An ignominious scuffling in the dark  
Where brute encounters brute baresark.

Keep to the pithead, then, nor pry  
Beyond what meets the eye,  
Since household stuff, stone walls, mountains and trees  
Placard the day with certainties

For individual truth must lie  
Within diversity,  
Under the skin all creatures are one race,  
Proved integers but by their face.

So he, who learns to comprehend  
The form of things, will find  
They in his eye that purest star have sown  
And changed his mind to singular stone.

## 26

Chiefly to mind appears  
That hour on Silverhowe  
When evening's lid hung low  
And the sky was about our ears.  
Buoyed between fear and love  
We watched in eastward form  
The armadas of the storm  
And sail superbly above,  
So near, they'd split and founder  
On the least jag of sense,

One false spark fire the immense  
Broadside the confounding thunder  
They pass, give not a salvo,  
And in their rainy wash  
We hear the horizons crash  
With monitors of woe

Only at highest power  
Can love and fear become  
Their equilibrium,  
And in that eminent hour  
A virtue is made plain  
Of passionate cleavage  
Like the hills' cutting edge  
When the sun sets to rain  
This is the single mind,  
This the star-solved equation  
Of life with life's negation  
A deathless cell designed  
To demonstrate death's act,  
Which, the more surely it moves  
To earth's influence, but proves  
Itself the more intact

## 27

With me, my lover makes  
The clock assert its chime  
But when she goes, she takes  
The mainspring out of time.

Yet this time-wrecking charm  
Were better than love dead

And its hollow alarum  
Hammered out on lead.

Why should I fear that Time  
Will superannuate  
These workmen of my rhyme—  
Love, despair and hate?

Fleeing the herd, I came  
To a graveyard on a hill,  
And felt its mould proclaim  
The bone gregarious still

Boredoms and agonies  
Work out the rhythm of bone —  
No peace till creature his  
Creator has outgrown

Passion dies from the heart  
But to infect the marrow,  
Holds dream and act apart  
Till the man discard his narrow

Sapience and folly  
Here, where the graves slumber  
In a green melancholy  
Of overblown summer

## PART IV

The hatches are let down  
And the night meets the day  
The spirit comes to its own  
The beast to its play

W H. AUDEN

## 28

*In the beginning was the Word*

UNDER different skies now, I recall  
The childhood of the Word

Before the Fall,

Was dancing on the green with sun and moon

*And the Word was with God*

Years pass, relaxed in a faun's afternoon

*And the Word was God*

For him rise up the litanies of leaves

From the tormented wood, and semi-breves

Of birds accompany the simple dawn

Obsequious to his mood the valleys yawn,

Nymphs scamper or succumb, waterfalls part

The hill-face with vivacious smiles The heart,

Propped up against its paradise, records

Each wave of godhead in a sea of words

He grows a wall of sunflower and moonflower blent

To protest his solitude and to prevent

Wolf or worm from trespassing on his rule

Observe how paradise can make a fool

They can't get in, but he—for a god no doubt

Is bound by his own laws—cannot get out

*And the Word was made flesh,*

Under different skies now,

Wrenching a stony song from a scant acre,

The Word still justifies its Maker

Green fields were my slippers,

Sky was my hat,

But curiosity

Killed the cat

For this did I burst  
My daisy band—  
To be clapped in irons  
By a strange hand?  
Nevertheless, you are well out of Eden  
For there's no wonder where all things are new,  
No dream where all is sleep, no vision where  
Seer and seen are one, nor prophecy  
Where only echo waits upon the tongue  
Now he has come to a country of stone walls,  
Breathes a precarious air  
Frontiers of adamant declare  
A cold autonomy. There echo starves,  
And the mountain ash bleeds stoically there  
Above the muscular stream.  
What cairn will show the way he went?  
A harrow rusting on defeated bones?  
Or will he leave a luckier testament—  
Rock deeply rent,  
Fountains of spring playing upon the air?

## 29

Those Himalayas of the mind  
Are not so easily possessed  
There's more than precipice and storm  
Between you and your Everest

You who declare the peak of peaks  
Alone will satisfy your want,  
Can you distil a grain of snow?  
Can you digest an adamant?

Better by far the household cock  
Scratching the common yard for corn,  
Whose rainy voice all night at will  
Can signify a private dawn

Another bird, sagacious too,  
Circles in plain bewilderment  
Where shoulder to shoulder long waves march  
Towards a magnetic continent

“What are these rocks impede our pomp?”  
Gesticulating to the sun  
The waves part ranks, sidle and fume,  
Then close behind them and march on.

The waves advance, the Absolute Cliffs  
Unaccountably repel  
They linger grovelling, where assault  
Has failed, attrition may tell

The bird sees nothing to the point,  
Shrugs an indifferent wing, proceeds  
From rock to rock in the mid-ocean  
Peering for barnacles and weeds

## 30

In the chaotic age  
This was enough for me—  
Her beauty walked the page  
And it was poetry.



Now that the crust has cooled,  
The floods are kept in pen,  
Mountains have got their mould  
And air its regimen.

Nothing of heat remains  
But where the sacred hill  
Conserves within her veins  
The fiery principle.

Fire can no longer shake  
Stars from their sockets down,  
It burns now but to make  
Vain motions above the town

This glum canal has lain  
Opaque night after night,  
One hour will entertain  
A jubilee of light,

And show that beauty is  
A motion of the mind  
By its own dark caprice  
Directed or confined

## 31

Where is the fool would want those days again  
Whose light was globed in pain  
And danced upon a point of wire?  
When the charged batteries of desire  
Had licence but to pass  
Into a narrow room of frosted glass?

The globe was broken and the light made free  
Of a king's territory  
Artemis then, that huntress pale,  
Flung her black dogs upon the trail  
So with one glance around  
The hunted lightning ran and went to ground

Safer perhaps within that cell to stay  
Which qualified its ray  
And gave it place and period,  
Than be at liberty where God  
Has put no firmament  
Of glass to prove dark and light different

But Artemis leaps down At her thin back  
Wheel the shades in a pack  
At once that old habit of fire  
Jumps out, not stopping to inquire  
Whether it follows or flies,  
Content to use the night for exercise

And I, when at the sporting queen's halloo  
The light obedient flew  
Blazing its trail across the wild—  
Resigned now but not reconciled,  
That ancient Sphinx I saw  
Put moon and shades like mice beneath its paw.

## 32

The red nor'-easter is out  
Trees in the covert strain  
Like dogs upon a leash  
And snuff the hurricane

Another wind and tree now  
Are constant to their west  
The breath that scours the midday  
Unseen, is manifest  
In this embittered thorn—  
Forcing the stubborn frame  
To grow one way and point  
His constancy and aim

This wind that fills the hollow  
Sky, of a vacuum  
Was purely bred The thorn once  
In modest seed lay mum  
That squats above the Atlantic  
Promontoried on pride.  
For my tenacious tree  
Requires not, to decide  
That he has roots somewhere,  
A tropic foliage,  
Since that the leaf recurs  
Is a sufficient gauge

Again, what of this glass  
Whereby the formulæ  
Of sense should all be solved?  
It cannot enlarge a flea  
Nor accurately define  
The features of a star  
Gazing through it I saw  
Nothing particular  
Distant or close A summer  
Accident it was  
Explained its property

It is a burning-glass  
Which interrupts the sun  
To make him more intense,  
And touch to a single flame  
The various heap of sense

## 33

Seventeen months ago  
We came to the mine on the moor A crow  
Sees more than meets the eye—  
What marrow in fleshless bones may lie  
And now I passed by a forbidding coast  
Where ironworks rust  
On each headland goats crop the salted grass  
Steam oozes out of the mud Earth has  
No promise for proprietors I from far  
Came, and passing saw something oracular.  
Put down the tripod here.

I stretched a line from pole to pole  
To hang my paper lanterns on Poor soul,  
By such a metaphysical conceit  
Thinking to make ends meet!  
This line, spun from the blind heart—  
What could it do but prove the poles apart?  
More expert now, I twist the dials, catch  
Electric hints, curt omens such  
As may be heard by one tapping the air  
That belts an ambiguous sphere  
Put down the tripod here

This is the interregnum of my year,  
All spring except the leaf is here,

All winter but the cold  
Bandage of snow for the first time unrolled  
Lays bare the wounds given when any fate  
And most men's company could humiliate  
Sterilized now, yet still they prick  
And pulse beneath the skin, moving me like  
An engine driven on  
By sparks of its own combustion  
There are going to be some changes made to-day

Then add to this that I  
Have known, and shall again, the greedy thigh,  
Browned by that sun, but not betrayed,  
Which puts the Dog-Star in the shade  
For though my world at one Equator meet,  
These Arctic zones are still complete  
Baring my skin to every bruise  
Love gives, I'll love the more, since they're but dues  
That flesh must pay to bone  
Till each is overthrown  
There are going to be some changes made to-day

## 34

The hawk comes down from the air  
Sharpening his eye upon  
A wheeling horizon  
Turned scrutiny to prayer

He guessed the prey that cowers  
Below, and learnt to keep  
The distance which can strip  
Earth to its blank contours.

Then trod the air, content  
With contemplation till  
The truth of valley and hill  
Should be self-evident

Or as the little lark  
Who veins the sky with song,  
Asking from dawn to dark  
No revenues of spring

But with the night descends  
Into his chosen tree,  
And the famed singer ends  
In anonymity

So from a summer's height  
I come into my peace,  
The wings have earned their night,  
And the song may cease

## NOTES TO TRANSITIONAL POEM

THE central theme of this poem is the single mind. The poem is divided into four parts, which essentially represent four phases of personal experience in the pursuit of single-mindedness. It will be seen that a transition is intended from one part to the next such as implies a certain spiritual progress and a consequent shifting of aspect. As far as any definitions can be attached to these aspects, they may be termed (1) metaphysical, (2) ethical, (3) psychological, while (4) is an attempt to relate the poetic impulse with the experience as a whole. Formally, the parts fall with fair accuracy into the divisions of a theorem in geometry, *i.e.* general enunciation, particular enunciation, proof, corollaries. The following notes may be of assistance to the diligent, they are intended simply for the elucidation of the text, and do not necessarily imply assent to any proposition that may be advanced in them

C D L

January, 1929

PAGE 9, lines 3-8, *cf* Spinoza, *Letters* "I would warn you that I do not attribute to nature either beauty or deformity, order or confusion. Only in relation to our imagination can things be called beautiful or ugly, well-ordered or confused."

PAGE 9, line 4, *cf* Spinoza, *De intell. emend.* "But above all a method must be thought out of healing the understanding and purifying it at the beginning."

PAGE 14, line 22, *cf* Exodus x, 21 and 27.

PAGE 18, line 6, *cf* Deuteronomy ix, 2, also 1, 28

PAGE 23, line 6 *sqq.*, *cf* page 47, line 5

PAGE 28, line 3, Cronos is here used as a symbol for desire

PAGE 28, line 21 *sqq*, contrast Donne

“But up into the watch-tower get,  
And see all things despoiled of fallacies ”

PAGE 28, line 23, “skiagram”—a drawing in shadow, not strictly the Greek sense

PAGE 38, line 21, *cf* Dante, *Inferno*

“Ed egli a me Questo misero modo  
Tengon l'anime triste di coloro,  
Che visser senza infamia e senza lodo ”

PAGE 40, line 23, *cf* Isaiah xxxv, 1

PAGE 42, line 9-16, *cf* Wyndham Lewis, *Art of Being Ruled*, Part 12, Chapter VII

PAGE 42, line 21, “Fear and love” throughout this poem represent the general principles of attraction and repulsion

PAGE 46, line 1, “the Word” in this poem stands for the individual poetic impulse, as a part of the Logos in the theologian's sense of “mind expressing God in the world ”

PAGE 46, line 4, *cf* “The Ballad of the Twa Brothers”

“O when will you come hame again?  
Dear Willie, tell to me!  
“When the sun and moon dance on yon green,  
And that will never be ” ”

PAGE 49, line 12, *cf* Henry James, *The Ambassadors*  
“Whether or no he had a grand idea of the lucid, he held that nothing ever was in fact—for anyone else—explained  
One went through the vain motions, but it was mostly a waste of life ”



PAGE 49, lines 17-20, *cf* note on page 9, lines 3-8

PAGE 50, line 23, *cf* page 11, line 13

PAGE 53, line 9, the refrain of a song sung by Miss Sophie Tucker

PAGE 53, line 21, *cf.* page 9, line 15

PAGE 54, lines 1-4, *cf* Spinoza, *De intell emend* "Finally, perception is that wherein a thing is perceived through its essence alone      A thing is said to be perceived through its essence alone when from the fact that I know something, I know what it is to know anything      "



FROM FEATHERS TO IRON

TO THE MOTHER



Do thoughts grow like feathers, the dead  
end of life?

W H. AUDEN

We take but three steps from feathers to  
iron.

JOHN KEATS



I

SUPPOSE that we, to-morrow or the next day,  
 Came to an end—in storm the shafting broken,  
 Or a mistaken signal, the flange lifting—  
 Would that be premature, a text for sorrow?

Say what endurance gives or death denies us  
 Love's proved in its creation, not eternity  
 Like leaf or linnet the true heart's affection  
 Is born, dies later, asks no reassurance

Over dark wood rises one dawn felicitous,  
 Bright through awakened shadows fall her crystal  
 Cadenzas, and once for all the wood is quickened  
 So our joys visit us, and it suffices

Nor fear we now to live who in the valley  
 Of the shadow of life have found a causeway,  
 For love restores the nerve and love is under  
 Our feet resilient. Shall we be weary?

Some say we walk out of Time altogether  
 This way into a region where the primrose  
 Shows an immortal dew, sun at meridian  
 Stands up for ever and in scent the lime tree

This is a land which later we may tell of  
 Here-now we know, what death cannot diminish  
 Needs no replenishing, yet certain are, though  
 Dying were well enough, to live is better

Passion has grown full man by his first birthday.  
 Running across the bean-fields in a south wind,

Fording the river mouth to feel the tide-race—  
Child's play that was, though proof of our possessions

Now our research is done, measured the shadow,  
The plains mapped out, the hills a natural bound'ry.  
Such and such is our country There remains to  
Plough up the meadowland, reclaim the marshes



## II

Let's leave this town Mutters of loom  
Nor winding gear disturb  
The flat and residential air—  
A city all suburb.

Go not this road, for arc-lamps cramp  
The dawn, sense fears to take  
A mortal step, and body obeys  
An automatic brake

Ah, leave the wall-eyed town, and come  
Where heaven keeps open house,  
Watch not the markets but the stars,  
Get shares of gilt-edged space

For what we have in hand is no  
Business of shop and street  
This is our strait, our Little Minch  
Where wind and tide meet

You are the tides running for ever  
Along their ancient groove  
Such winds am I, pause not for breath  
And to fresh shores will move

## III

Back to the countryside  
That will not lose its pride  
When the green flags of summer all are taken,  
Having no mind to force  
The seasons from their course  
And no remorse for a front line forsaken

Look how the athletic field  
His flowery vest has peeled  
To wrestle another fall with rain and sleet  
The rock will not relent  
Nor desperate earth consent  
Till the spent winter blows his long retreat

Come, autumn, use the spur!  
Let us not still defer  
To drive slow furrows in the impatient soil  
Persuade us now these last  
Silk summer shreds to cast  
And fasten on the harsh habit of toil

The swallows are all gone  
Into the rising sun.  
You leave to-night for the Americas  
Under the dropping days  
Alone the labourer stays  
And says that winter will be slow to pass

## IV

Come on, the wind is whirling our summer away,  
And air grows dizzy with leaves  
It is time to lay up for a winter day,  
Conserve earth's infant energy, water's play,  
Bind the sun down in sheaves

Contact of sun and earth loads granary,  
Stream's frolic will grind flour,  
Tree's none the worse for fruit Shall we  
Insulate our strong currents of ecstasy  
Or breed units of power?

Bodies we have, fabric and frame designed  
To take the stress of love,  
Buoyant on gust, multi-engined  
Experiment's over. We must up and find  
What trade-routes are above

This is no pleasure trip We carry freight  
To a certain end, not whirled  
Past earth's pull, nosing at no star's gate  
We'll have fresh air, will serve, perhaps, the state,  
Surely, enlarge our world

Or, think Tightens the darkness, the rails thrum,  
For night express is due.  
Glory of steam and steel strikes dumb,  
Sense sucked away swirls in the vacuum  
So passion passes through

Here is love's junction, no terminus  
He arrives at girl or boy.  
Signal a clear line and let us  
Give him the run of life we shall get thus  
A record of our joy

## V

Beauty's end is in sight,  
Terminus where all feather joys alight  
Wings that flew lightly  
Fold and are iron We see  
The thin end of mortality

We must a little part,  
And sprouting seed crack our cemented heart  
Who would get an heir  
Initial loss must bear  
A part of each will be elsewhere

What life may now decide  
Is past the clutch of caution, the range of pride  
Speaking from the snow  
The crocus lets me know  
That there is life to come, and go

## VI

Now she is like the white tree-rose  
That takes a blessing from the sun  
Summer has filled her veins with light,  
And her warm heart is washed with noon

Or as a poplar, ceaselessly  
Gives a soft answer to the wind  
Cool on the light her leaves lie sleeping,  
Folding a column of sweet sound

Powder the stars Forbid the night  
To wear those brilliants for a brooch  
So soon, dark death, you may close down  
The mines that made this beauty rich

Her thoughts are pleiads, stooping low  
O'er glades where nightingale has flown  
And like the luminous night around her  
She has at heart a certain dawn

## VII

Rest from loving and be living.  
Fallen is fallen past retrieving  
The unique flyer dawn's dove  
Arrowing down feathered with fire.

Cease denying, begin knowing  
Comes peace this way here comes renewing  
With dower of bird and bud knocks  
Loud on winter wall on death's door

Here's no meaning but of morning  
Naught soon of night but stars remaining,  
Sink lower, fade, as dark womb  
Recedes creation will step clear

VIII

- 3 We whom a full tornado cast up high,  
Two years marooned on self-sufficiency,  
Kissing on an island out of the trade-routes  
Nor glancing at horizon,—we'll not dare  
Outstay the welcome of our tropic sun
- 1E Here is the dark Interior, noon yet high,  
Light to work by and a sufficiency  
Of timber Build then We may reach the trade-  
routes  
We'll take the winds at their word, yes, will dare  
Wave's curling lip, the hot looks of the sun
- HE Hull is finished Now must the foraging eye  
Take in provisions for a long journey  
Put by our summertime, the fruits, the sweet roots,  
The virgin spring moss-shadowed near the shore,  
And over idle sands the halcyon
- SHE No mark out there, no mainland meets the eye  
Horizon gapes, and yet must we journey  
Beyond the bays of peace, pull up our sweet roots,  
Cut the last cord links us to native shore,  
Toil on waters too troubled for the halcyon
- BOTH Though we strike a new continent, it shall be  
Our islet, a new world, our colony  
If we miss land, no matter We've a stout boat  
Provisioned for some years we need endure  
No further ill than to be still alone



## IX

Waning is now the sensual eye  
Allowed no flaw upon the skin  
And burnt away wrinkle and feature,  
Fed with pure spirit from within

Nesciently that vision works  
Just so the pure night-eye, the moon,  
Labours, a monumental mason,  
To gloss over a world of stone

Look how she marbled heath and terrace,  
Effacing boundary and date  
She took the sky, earth was below her  
A shining shell, a featherweight

No more may pupil love bend over  
A plane theorem, black and white  
The interlocking hours revolve,  
The globe goes lumbering into light

Admiral earth breaks out his colours  
Bright at the forepeak of the day,  
Hills in their hosts escort the sun  
And valleys welcome him their way

Shadow takes depth and shape turns solid  
Far-ranging, the creative eye  
Sees arable, marsh, enclosed and common,  
Assents to multiplicity.

## X

Twenty weeks near past  
Since the seed took to earth  
Winter has done his worst  
Let upland snow ignore,  
Earth wears a smile betrays  
What summer she has in store  
She feels insurgent forces  
Gathering at the core,  
And a spring rumour courses  
Through her, till the cold extreme  
Sleep of grove and grass is  
Stirred, begins to dream  
So, when the violins gather  
And soar to a final theme,  
Broadcast on winds of ether  
That golden seed extends  
Beneath the sun-eye, the father,  
To ear at the earth's ends

## XI

There is a dark room,  
The locked and shuttered womb,  
Where negative's made positive  
Another dark room,  
The blind, the bolted tomb,  
Where positives change to negative

We may not undo  
That or escape this, who  
Have birth and death coiled in our bones  
Nothing we can do  
Will sweeten the real rue,  
That we begin, and end, with groans

## XII

As one who wanders into old workings  
Dazed by the noonday, desiring coolness,  
Has found retreat barred by fall of rockface,  
Gropes through galleries where granite bruises  
Taut palm and panic patters close at heel,  
Must move forward as tide to the moon's nod,  
As mouth to breast in blindness is beckoned  
Nightmare nags at his elbow and narrows  
Horizon to pinpoint, hope to hand's breadth  
Slow drip the seconds, time is stalactite,  
For nothing intrudes here to tell the time,  
Sun marches not, nor moon with muffled step  
He wants an opening,—only to break out,  
To see the dark glass cut by day's diamond,  
To relax again in the lap of light

But we seek a new world through old workings,  
Whose hope lies like seed in the loins of earth,  
Whose dawn draws gold from the roots of darkness  
Not shy of light nor shrinking from shadow  
Like Jesuits in jungle we journey  
Deliberately bearing to brutish tribes  
Christ's assurance, arts of agriculture  
As a train that travels underground track  
Feels current flashed from far-off dynamos,  
Our wheels whirling with impetus elsewhere  
Generated we run, are ruled by rails  
Train shall spring from tunnel to terminus,  
Out on to plain shall the pioneer plunge,  
Earth reveal what veins fed, what hill covered  
Lovely the leap, explosion into light

## XIII

But think of passion and pain  
Those absolute dictators will enchain  
The low, exile the princely parts  
They close a door between the closest hearts  
Their verdict stands in steel,  
From whose blank rigour kings may not appeal

When in love's airs we'd lie,  
Like elms we leaned together with a sigh  
And sighing severed, and no rest  
Had till that wind was past  
Then drooped in a green sickness over the plain  
Wanting our wind again

Now pain will come for you,  
Take you into a desert without dew,  
Labouring through the unshadowed day  
To blast the sharp scarps, open up a way  
There for the future line  
But I shall wait at the railhead alone

Small comfort may be found,  
Though our embraced roots grope in the same ground,  
Though on one permanent way we run,  
Yes, under the same sun.  
Contact the means, but travellers report  
The ends are poles apart.

## XIV

Now the full-throated daffodils,  
Our trumpeters in gold,  
Call resurrection from the ground  
And bid the year be bold

To-day the almond tree turns pink,  
The first flush of the spring,  
Winds loll and gossip through the town  
Her secret whispering

Now too the bird must try his voice  
Upon the morning air,  
Down drowsy avenues he cries  
A novel great affair

He tells of royalty to be,  
How with her train of rose  
Summer to coronation comes  
Through waving wild hedgerows

To-day crowds quicken in a street,  
The fish leaps in the flood  
Look there, gasometer rises,  
And here bough swells to bud

For our love's luck, our stowaway,  
Stretches in his cabin,  
Our youngster joy barely concerned  
Shows up beneath the skin

Our joy was but a gusty thing  
Without sinew or wit,  
An infant flyaway, but now  
We make a man of it

## XV

I have come so far upon my journey  
This is the frontier, this is where I change,  
And wait between two worlds to take refreshment.

I see the mating plover at play  
Blowing themselves about over the green wheat,  
And in a bank I catch  
The shy scent of the primrose that prevails  
Strangely upon the heart Here is  
The last flutter of the wind-errant soul,  
Earth's first faint tug at the earthbound soul

So, waiting here between winter and summer,  
Conception and fruition, I  
Take what refreshment may be had from skies  
Uncertain as the wind, prepare  
For a new route, a change of constitution

Some change of constitution, where  
Has been for years an indeterminate quarrel  
Between a fevered head and a cold heart,  
Rulers who cannot rule, rebels who will not  
Rebel, an age divided  
Between to-morrow's wink, yesterday's warning

And yet this self, contains  
Tides continents and stars—a myriad selves,  
Is small and solitary as one grass-blade  
Passed over by the wind  
Amongst a myriad grasses on the prairie

You in there, my son, my daughter,  
Will you become dictator, resolve the factions?  
Will you be my ambassador  
And make my peace with the adjacent empires?



## XVI

More than all else might you,  
My son, my daughter,  
Be metal to bore through  
The impermeable clay  
And rock that overlay  
The living water.

Through that artesian well  
My self may out,  
Finding its own level.  
This way the waste land turns  
To arable, and towns  
Are rid of drought

## XVII

Down hidden causeways of the universe  
Through space-time's cold  
Indifferent airs I strolled,  
A pointless star till in my course  
I happened on the sun  
And in a spurt of fire to her did run

That heavenly body as I neared began  
To make response,  
And heaved with fire at once  
One wave of gathered heat o'erran  
Her all and came to a head,  
A mountain based upon an ardent bed

(Faith may move mountains, but love's twice as strong,  
For love can raise  
A mountain where none was  
Also can prove astronomers wrong  
Who deem the stars too hot  
For life —here is a star that has begot )

Soon from the mother body torn and whirled  
By tidal pull  
And left in space to cool  
That mountain top will be a world  
Treading its own orbit,  
And look to her for warmth, to me for wit.

## XVIII

It is time to think of you,  
Shortly will have your freedom  
As anemones that renew  
Earth's innocence, be welcome  
Out of your folded sleep  
Come, as the western winds come  
To pasture with the sheep  
On a weary of winter height  
Lie like a pool unwrinkled  
That takes the sky to heart,  
Where stars and shadows are mingled  
And suns run gold with heat  
Return as the winds return,  
Heir to an old estate  
Of upland, flower and tarn

But born to essential dark,  
To an age that toes the line  
And never o'ersteps the mark  
Take off your coat grow lean  
Suffer humiliation  
Patrol the passes alone,  
And eat your iron ration  
Else, wag as the world wags—  
One more mechanical jane  
Or gentleman in wax  
Is it here we shall regain  
Championship? Here awakes  
A white hope shall preserve  
From flatterers, pimps and fakes  
Integrity and nerve?

## XIX

Do not expect again a phoenix hour,  
The triple-towered sky, the dove complaining,  
Sudden the rain of gold and heart's first ease  
Tranced under trees by the eldritch light of sundown

By a blazed trail our joy will be returning  
One burning hour throws light a thousand ways,  
And hot blood stays into familiar gestures  
The best years wait, the body's plenitude.

Consider then, my lover, this is the end  
Of the lark's ascending, the hawk's unearthly hover  
Spring season is over soon and first heatwave,  
Grave-browed with cloud ponders the huge horizon

Draw up the dew Swell with pacific violence.  
Take shape in silence. Grow as the clouds grew  
Beautiful brood the cornlands, and you are heavy,  
Leafy the boughs—they also hide big fruit

## XX

Sky-wide an estuary of light  
Ebbs amid cloud banks out of sight  
At her star-anchorage shall swing  
Earth, the old freighter, till morning

Ride above your shadow and trim  
Cargo till the stars grow dim  
Weigh then from the windless river,  
You've a treasure to deliver

Behold the incalculable seas  
Change face for every cloud and breeze  
But a prime mover works inside,  
The constant the integral tide

Though black-bordered fancies vex  
You and veering moods perplex,  
Underneath's a current knowing  
Well enough what way it's going

Stroked by their windy shadows lie  
The grainlands waving at the sky  
That golden grace must all be shed  
To fill granaries, to make bread

Do not grieve for beauty gone  
Limbs that ran to meet the sun  
Lend their lightness to another,  
Child shall recreate the mother

## XXI

Your eyes are not open. You are alone  
You then, to be my first-born, this is for you.

May know, as I, sleet from a bland sky falling,  
Perfidious landmark, false dawn  
Look out through panes at a spoilt holiday,  
And weep, taking eternity to bed.

When the hair grows, perceive a world  
Officered by semi-cads and second baboons,  
Be stood in the far corner

Later, after each dream of beauty ethereal,  
Bicycling against wind to see the vicar's daughter,  
Be disappointed.

And yet there is yet worse to come  
Desire worn to the bone leaves room for pride's attrition.  
For they shall ride in bloody uniform,  
Offering choice of a sooner death or a later,  
Mark you to ground, stop the earths,  
Jog home to supper under a bland sky

Yes, you may know, as I do, self foreshortened,  
Blocked out with blackness finally all the works of days  
O you who turn the wheel and look to both sides,  
Consider Phlebas, who shall be taller and handsomer than  
you

One shall rub shoulders with the firmfoot oak  
And with all shifting shade join hands  
Shall have the heels of time, shall shoot from afar  
And find the loopholes of the armoured train

When the machine's run in, will get  
Free play, better no doubt for the contracting  
Of an indeterminate world

Day and night will make armistice for this one,  
Entering the walled garden who knows the hour of spirit  
Reconciled to flesh

Then falling leaf falls to renew  
Acquaintance with old contours, with a world in outline  
Is time now to set house in order, bury  
The dead and count the living, consolidate  
The soul against proved enemies  
Time with the lengthening shadow to grow tall.

Thus the free spirit emerges, in courts at ease,  
Content with standing-room, pleased in a small allotment.

## XXII

In this sector when barrage lifts and we  
Are left alone with death,  
There'll be no time to question strategy  
But now, midsummer offensive not begun,  
We wait and draw mutinous breath,  
Wondering what to gain  
We stake these fallow fields and the good sun

This has happened to other men before,  
Have hung on the lip of danger  
And have heard death moving about next door  
Yet I look up at the sky's billowing,  
Surprised to find so little change there,  
Though in that ample ring  
Heaven knows what power lies coiled ready to spring

What were we at, the moment when we kissed—  
Extending the franchise  
To an indifferent class, would we enlist  
Fresh power who know not how to be so great?  
Beget and breed a life—what's this  
But to perpetuate  
Man's labour, to enlarge a rank estate?

Planted out here some virtue still may flower,  
But our dead follies too—  
A shock of buried weeds to turn it sour  
Draw up conditions—will the heir conform?  
Or thank us for the favour, who  
Inherits a bankrupt firm,  
Worn-out machinery, an exhausted farm?



## XXIII

This was not the mind's undertaking,  
But as outrageous heat  
Breaking in thunder across hills  
Sweetens our aching dust.

Such is not answerable to mind,  
Is random as a flake  
Blindly down-dancing here or clouds  
That take their windy course

Thin from thin air reason issues,  
We live on living earth  
Whose trees enlarge their fruit without  
Misgiving or excuse.

Reason is but a riddle of sand,  
Its substance shifts in storm  
Space-spanned, God-girdled, love will keep  
Its form, being planned of bone

## XXIV

Speak then of constancy Thin eyelids weakly thus  
Batted to beauty, lips that reject her, is not this,  
Nor lust of eye (Christ said it) denied the final kiss

Rather a set response, metal-to-magnet affair,  
Flows with the tidal blood, like red of rose or fire  
Is a fast dye outlasts the fabric of desire

Happy this river reach sleeps with the sun at noon,  
Takes dews and rains to her wide bed, refusing none  
That full-filled peace, yet constant to one sea will run

So melt we down small toys to make each other rich,  
Although no getting or spending can extend our reach  
Whose poles are love, nor close who closer lie than leech

For think—throbbing our hearts linked so by endless band,  
So geared together, need not otherwise be bound

## XXV

And since, though young, I know  
Not to expect much good,  
Our dreams from first to last  
Being treacherous underfoot,

Best I dare wish for you,  
That once (my son, my daughter)  
You may get home on rock  
Feet tired of treading water.

Lucky, will have also  
An outward grace to ease  
The axles of your world  
And keep the parts at peace

Not the waste random stuff  
That stops the gannet's wing,  
I mean, such oil ensures  
A turbine's smooth running

## XXVI

Beauty breaks ground, O, in strange places  
Seen after cloudburst down the bone-dry watercourses,  
In Texas a great gusher, a grain-  
Elevator in the Ukraine plain,  
To a new generation turns new faces

Here too fountains will soon be flowing  
Empty the hills where love was lying late, was playing,  
Shall spring to life we shall find there  
Milk and honey for love's heir,  
Shadow from sun also, deep ground for growing

My love is a good land The stranger  
Entering here was sure he need prospect no further.  
Acres that were the eyes' delight  
Now feed another appetite.  
What formed her first for seed, for crop must change her

This is my land I've overheard it  
Making a promise out of clay All is recorded—  
Early green, drought, ripeness, rainfall,  
Our village fears and festivals,  
When the first tractor came and how we cheered it.

And as the wind whose note will deepen  
In the upgrowing tree, who runs for miles to open  
His throat above the wood, my song  
With that increasing life grew strong,  
And will have there a finished form to sleep in

## XXVII

Dropping the few last days, are drops of lead,  
Heavier hang than a lifetime on the heart  
Past the limetrees that drug the air jackdaws  
Slanting across a sluggish wind go home  
On either side of the Saltway fields of clover  
Cling to their sweetness under a threatening sky  
Numb with crisis all, cramped with waiting  
Shallowly breathes the wind or holds his breath,  
As in ambush waiting to leap at convoy  
Must pass this way—there can be no evasions  
Surly the sky up there and means mischief,  
The parchment sky that hourly tightens above us,  
Screwed to storm-pitch, where thunder shall roll and roll  
Intolerably postponing the last movement

Now the young challenger, too tired to sidestep,  
Hunches to give or take decisive blow.  
The climbers from the highest camp set out  
Saying goodbye to comrades on the glacier,  
A day of rock between them and the summit  
That will require their record or their bones  
Now is a charge laid that will split the hill-face,  
Tested the wires, the plunger ready to hand  
For time ticks nearer to a rebel hour,  
Charging of barricades, bloodshed in city  
The watcher in the window looking out  
At the eleventh hour on sun and shadow,  
On fixed abodes and the bright air between,  
Knows for the first time what he stands to lose

Crisis afar deadens the nerve, it cools  
The blood and hoods imagination's eye,  
Whether we apprehend it or remember  
Is fighting on the frontier little leaks through  
Of possible disaster, but one morning  
Shells begin to drop in the capital  
So I, indoors for long enough remembering  
The round house on the cliff, the springy slopes,  
The well in the wood, nor doubting to revisit  
*But if* to see new sunlight on old haunts  
Swallows and men come back *but if* come back  
From lands *but if* beyond our view *but if*  
*She dies?* Why then, here is a space to let,  
The owner gone abroad, never returning

## XXVIII

Though bodies are apart  
The dark hours so confine  
And fuse our hearts, sure, death  
Will find no way between.

Narrow this hour, that bed,  
But room for us to explore  
Pain's long-drawn equator,  
The farthest ice of fear

Storm passes east, recurs  
The beakéd lightnings stoop  
The sky falls down the clouds  
Are wrung to the last drop

Another day is born now  
Woman, your work is done.  
This is the end of labour.  
Come out into the sun!

## XXIX

Come out in the sun, for a man is born to-day!  
Early this morning whistle in the cutting told  
Train was arriving, hours overdue, delayed  
By snow-drifts, engine-trouble, Act of God, who cares  
now?—

For here alights the distinguished passenger  
Take a whole holiday in honour of this!

Kipfer's back from heaven, Bendien to Holland,  
Larwood and Voce in the Notts eleven  
Returning also the father the mother,  
Chastened and cheered by underworld excursion,  
Alive returning from the black country,  
Take a whole holiday in honour of this

Now shall the airman vertically banking  
Out of the blue write a new sky-sign,  
The nine tramp steamers rusting in the estuary  
Get up full pressure for a trade revival,  
The crusty landlord renew the lease, and everyone  
Take a whole holiday in honour of this

To-day let director forget the deficit,  
Schoolmaster his handicap, hostess her false face  
Let phantasiist take charge of flesh-and-blood situation,  
Petty-officer be rapt in the Seventh Symphony  
For here a champion is born and commands you  
Take a whole holiday in honour of this

Wherever radiance from ashes arises—  
Willowherb glowing on abandoned slagheaps,



Dawn budding scarlet in a bed of darkness,  
Life from exhausted womb outstriving—  
There shall the spirit be lightened and gratefully  
Take a whole holiday in honour of this



## EPILOGUE



## LETTER TO W. H. AUDEN

A mole first, out of riddling passages  
You came up for a breather into my field,  
Then back to your engineering, a scheme conjectured  
From evidence of earth not cast at random  
The surly vegetable said "What's this  
Butting through sand for unapparent reasons?"  
The animal said "This fellow is no runner "  
Mineral said "Brother, you like the dark "  
What are you at down there, nosing among  
Saxon skulls, roots of our genealogies?  
This is the field of ghosts There are no clues here,  
But dead creators packed in close fibre  
Perhaps you are going straight to some point, straighter  
And further than these furrows I drive in daylight

Daffodils now, the pretty débutantes,  
Are curtsying at the first court of the year  
Their schoolgirl smell unmans young lechers You  
Preferred, I remember, the plump boy, the crocus  
Enough of that They only lie at your feet  
But I, who saw the sapling, prophesied  
A growth superlative and branches writing  
On heaven a new signature For I  
Looked at no garden shrub, chantry of thrushes,  
But such a tree as, gripping its rock perch  
On a northern fell within the sound of hammers,  
Gives shadow to the stonechat and reminder  
Of chastity to men grown venerable  
Will give its name to that part of the country

This was the second time that you had pulled  
The rusty trigger summoning the stragglers  
Once more the bird goes packing, the skeleton  
Sets teeth against a further dissolution  
And what have we to hope for who are bound,  
Though we strip off the last assurance of flesh  
For expedition, to lay our bones somewhere  
Say that a rescue party should see fit  
To do us some honour, publish our diaries,  
Send home the relics—how should we thank them?  
The march is what we asked for, it is ended  
Still, let us wear the flesh away and leave  
Nothing for birds, anatomy to men

# THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN

TO W H AUDEN





## PART ONE

Come, then, companions, this is the spring of blood,  
Heart's heyday, movement of masses, beginning of good.

R E WARNER



NOW to be with you, elate, unshared,  
My kestrel joy, O hoverer in wind,  
Over the quarry furiously at rest  
Chaired on shoulders of shouting wind

Where's that unique one, wind and wing married,  
Aloft in contact of earth and ether,  
Feathery my comet, Oh too often  
From heav'n harried by carrion cares

No searcher may hope to flush that fleet one  
Not to be found by gun or glass,  
In old habits, last year's hunting-ground,  
Whose beat is wind-wide, whose perch a split second

But surely will meet him, late or soon,  
Who turns a corner into new territory,  
Spirit mating afresh shall discern him  
On the world's noon-top purely poised

Void are the valleys, in town no trace,  
And dumb the sky-dividing hills  
Swift outrider of lumbering earth  
Oh hasten hither my kestrel joy!

2

But Two there are, shadow us everywhere  
And will not let us be till we are dead,  
Hardening the bones, keeping the spirit spare,  
Original in water, earth and air,  
Our bitter cordial, our daily bread.

## THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN

Turning over old follies in ante-room,  
For first-born waiting or for late reprieve,  
Watching the safety-valve, the slackening loom,  
Abed, abroad, at every turn and tomb  
A shadow starts, a hand is on your sleeve

O you, my comrade, now or to-morrow flayed  
Alive, crazed by the nibbling nerve, my friend  
Whom hate has cornered or whom love betrayed,  
By hunger sapped, trapped by a stealthy tide,  
Brave for so long but whimpering in the end

Such are the temporal princes, fear and pain,  
Whose borders march with the ice-fields of death,  
And from that servitude escape there's none  
Till in the grave we set up house alone  
And buy our liberty with our last breath

### 3

Somewhere beyond the railheads  
Of reason, south or north,  
Lies a magnetic mountain  
Riveting sky to earth

No line is laid so far  
Ties rusting in a stack  
And sleepers—dead men's bones—  
Mark a defeated track

Kestrel who yearly changes  
His tenement of space  
At the last hovering  
May signify that place.

Iron in the soul,  
Spirit steeled in fire,  
Needle trembling on truth—  
These shall draw me there

The planets keep their course,  
Blindly the bee comes home,  
And I shall need no sextant  
To prove I'm getting warm

Near that miraculous mountain  
Compass and clock must fail,  
For space stands on its head there  
And time chases its tail

There's iron for the asking  
Will keep all winds at bay,  
Girders to take the leaden  
Strain of a sagging sky

Oh there's a mine of metal,  
Enough to make me rich  
And build right over chaos  
A cantilever bridge

## 4

Make no mistake, this is where you get off,  
Sue with her suckling, Cyril with his cough,  
Bert with a blazer and a safety-razor,  
Old John Braddleum and Terence the toff.  
And now, may I ask, have you made any plans?  
You can't go further along these lines,  
Positively this is the end of the track,  
It's rather late and there's no train back.

So if you are wanting to get anywhere  
You must use your feet or take to the air,  
The penny-a-liner, the seven-course-diner,  
Prebendary Cute and the water-diviner—  
Are you sure you don't want to go somewhere?  
"Is it mountain there or mirage across the sand?"  
That's Terra Incognita, Bogey-Man's-Land  
Why not give it a trial? You might go further  
And fare much worse "No, no, that's going rather  
Too far, besides, the whole thing may just be a sell "  
Then book your bed-sitter at the station hotel  
Or stay at the terminus till you grow verminous,  
Eating chocolate creams from the slot-machines,  
But don't blame me when you feel unwell  
Line was a good line, ballasted on grit,  
Surveyors weren't fools, platelayers didn't quit,  
Viaduct for river, embankment for marsh,  
Cutting for tough rock, signal for smash  
Can you keep the system going? Can you replace  
Rolling stock? Is everything all right at the base?  
Supposing they cut your communications  
Can you live on here without any rations?  
Then don't blame me when you're up the tree,  
No trains coming through and you're feeling blue,  
When you're left high and dry and you want to cry,  
When you're in the cart and you've got a weak heart,  
When you're up the pole and you can't find your soul,  
When the shops are all looted and you've run out of coal  
So it's me for the mountain But before I begin  
I'm taking a light engine back along the line  
For a last excursion, a tour of inspection,  
To clear the head and to aid the digestion

Then I'll hit the trail for that promising land,  
May catch up with Wystan and Rex my friend,  
Go mad in good company, find a good country,  
Make a clean sweep or make a clean end

## 5

Let us be off! Our steam  
Is deafening the dome  
The needle in the gauge  
Points to a long-banked rage,  
And trembles there to show  
What a pressure's below  
Valve cannot vent the strain  
Nor iron ribs refrain  
That furnace in the heart  
Come on, make haste and start  
Coupling-rod and wheel  
Welded of patient steel,  
Piston that will not stir  
Beyond the cylinder  
To take in its stride  
A teeming countryside

A countryside that gleams  
In the sun's weeping beams,  
Where wind-pump, byre and barrow  
Are mellowed to mild sorrow,  
Agony and sweat  
Grown over with regret  
What golden vesper hours  
Halo the old grey towers,

What honeyed bells in valleys  
Embalm our faiths and follies!  
Here are young daffodils  
Wind-wanton, and the hills  
Have made their peace with heaven  
Oh lovely the heart's haven,  
Meadows of endless May,  
A spirit's holiday!

Traveller, take care,  
Pick no flowers there!



## PART TWO

Drive your cart and your plough over the bones  
of the dead.

WILLIAM BLAKE

## 6

N EARING again the legendary isle  
Where sirens sang and mariners were skinned,  
We wonder now what was there to beguile  
That such stout fellows left their bones behind

Those chorus-girls are surely past their prime,  
Voices grow shrill and paint is wearing thin,  
Lips that sealed up the sense from gnawing time  
Now beg the favour with a graveyard grin

We have no flesh to spare and they can't bite,  
Hunger and sweat have stripped us to the bone,  
A skeleton crew we toil upon the tide  
And mock the theme-song meant to lure us on

No need to stop the ears, avert the eyes  
From purple rhetoric of evening skies

## 7

*First Defendant speaks*

I that was two am one,  
We that were one are two  
Warm in my walled garden the flower grew first,  
Transplanted it ran wild on the estate  
Why should it ever need a new sun?  
Not navel-string in the cold dawn cut,  
Nor a weaned appetite, nor going to school  
That autumn did it Simply, one day  
He crossed the frontier and I did not follow  
Returning, spoke another language.

Blessed are they that mourn,  
That shear the spring grass from an early grave  
They are not losers, never have known the hour  
When an indifferent exile  
Passes through the metropolis *en route*  
For Newfoundland

Mother earth, understand me You send up  
So many leaves to meet the light,  
So many flights of birds,  
That keep you all their days in shade and song,  
And the blown leaf is part of you again  
And the frozen blackbird falls into your breast.  
Shall not the life-giver be life-receiver?  
Am I alone to stand  
Outside the natural economy?  
Pasteurise mother's milk,  
Spoon out the waters of comfort in kilogrammes,  
Let love be clinic, let creation's pulse  
Keep Greenwich time, guard creature  
Against creator, and breed your supermen!  
But not from me for I  
Must have life unconditional, or none  
So, like a willow, all its wood curtailed,  
I stand by the last ditch of narrowing world,  
And stir not, though I see  
Pit-heads encroach or glacier crawl down.

This was your world and this I owe you,  
Room for growing, a site for building,  
The braced sinew, the hands agreeing,  
Mind foreseeing and nerve for facing

You were my world my breath my seasons  
Where blood ran easy and springs failed not,  
Kind was clover to feet exploring  
A broad earth and all to discover  
Simple that world, of two dimensions,  
Of stone mansions and good examples,  
Each image actual, nearness was no  
Fear and distance without a mirage  
Dawn like a greyhound leapt the hill-tops,  
A million leaves held up the noonday,  
Evening was slow with bells pealing,  
And night compelling to breast and pillow  
This was my world, Oh this you gave me,  
Safety for seed, petal uncurled there,  
Love asked no proving nor price, a country  
Sunny for play, for spring manœuvres

Woman, ask no more of me,  
Chill not the blood with jealous feud  
This is a separate country now,  
Will pay respects but no tribute  
Demand no atavistic rites,  
Preference in trade or tithe of grain,  
Bound by the limiting matrix I  
Increased you once, will not again.  
My vision's patented, my plant  
Set up, my constitution whole,  
New fears, old tunes cannot induce  
Nostalgia of the sickly soul  
Would you prolong your day, transfuse  
Young blood into your veins? Beware

Lest one oppressed by autumn's weight  
May thrill to feel death in the air  
Let love be like a natural day  
That folds her work and takes to bed,  
Ploughland and tree stand out in black,  
Enough memorial for the dead

## 9

*Second Defendant speaks*

Let us now praise famous men,  
Not your earth-shakers, not the dynamiters,  
But who in the Home Counties or the Khyber,  
Trimming their nails to meet an ill wind,  
Facing the Adversary with a clean collar,  
Justified the system  
Admire the venerable pile that bred them,  
Bones are its foundations,  
The pinnacles are stone abstractions,  
Whose halls are whispering-galleries designed  
To echo voices of the past, dead tongues  
White hopes of England here  
Are taught to rule by learning to obey,  
Bend over before vested interests,  
Kiss the rod, salute the quarter-deck,  
Here is no savage discipline  
Of peregrine swooping, of fire destroying,  
But a civil code, no capital offender  
But the cool cad, the man who goes too far.  
Ours the curriculum  
Neither of building birds nor wasteful waters,  
Bound in book not violent in vein

Here we inoculate with dead ideas  
Against blood-epidemics, against  
The infection of faith and the excess of life.  
Our methods are up to date, we teach  
Through head and not by heart,  
Language with gramophones and sex with charts,  
Prophecy by deduction, prayer by numbers  
For honours see prospectus those who leave us  
Will get a post and pity the poor,  
Their eyes glaze at strangeness,  
They are never embarrassed, have a word for everything,  
Living on credit, dying when the heart stops,  
Will wear black armlets and stand a moment in silence  
For the passing of an era, at their own funeral

## IO

You'll be leaving soon and it's up to you, boys,  
Which shall it be? You must make your choice  
There's a war on, you know Will you take your stand  
In obsolete forts or in no-man's-land?  
That ancestral castle, that picturesque prestige  
Looks well on paper but will it stand a siege?  
All modern conveniences—still, I should change  
Position now the enemy knows the range  
Blockade may begin before you're much older—  
Will you tighten the belt and shrug the shoulder  
Or plough up the playing-fields, sow new soil,  
Build a reservoir and bore for oil?  
"Take a sporting chance," they tell you But will it suffice  
To wear a scrum-cap against falling skies?  
"Play the game" but supposing the other chap kicks,  
You'd like to have learnt some rough-house tricks

It boils down to this—do you really want to win  
Or prefer the fine gesture of giving in?  
Are you going to keep or to make the rules,  
Die with fighters or be dead with fools?  
Men are wanted who will volunteer  
To go aloft and cut away tangled gear,  
Break through to blocked galleries below pit-head,  
Get in touch with living and raise from the dead  
Men to catch spies, fly aeroplanes,  
Harrow derelict acres and mend the drains  
There'll be work for you all if you're fain without feigning  
To give up toys and go into training  
But you'll have to forget a great deal you've learnt,  
The licence of Saturn, lacerations of Lent,  
Self-abuse, your dignity, the Bad and the Good,  
Heroism in phantasy and fainting at blood  
And you'll have to remember a great deal you've forgotten,  
How to love a girl and how to sew a button,  
Tiger's shock-tactics, elephant's defence,  
The integral spirit and the communal sense  
Can you sing at your work? Enforce discipline  
Without insignia? Then you've still a chance to win

## I I

*Third Defendant speaks*

I have always acted for the best  
My business is the soul I have given it rope,  
Coaxed it heavenward, but would not let it escape me  
The peoples have sought a Ruler  
I conjured one for each after his own image,  
For savage a Dark Demon, for Hebrew a Patriot,

## T E M A G N E T I C M O U N T A I N

r Christian a Comforter, for atheist a Myth  
e rulers have sought an Ally  
ave called down thunders on the side of authority,  
ghtnings to galvanise the law,  
omising the bread of heaven to the hungry of earth,  
unting the spirit into grassy sidings,  
ave served the temporal princes  
iere have been men ere now, disturbers of the peace,  
aders out of my land of milk and honey,  
escribing harder diet,  
'hom I thrashed, outlawed, slew, or if persisting  
eified, shelving them and their dynamite doctrines  
p in the clouds out of the reach of children  
have always acted for the best  
lung on the skirts of progress, the tail of revolution,  
eady to drug the defeated and bless the victor  
am a man apart  
Who sits in the dark professing a revelation  
xploiting the Word with the letter I turn  
oy into sacraments, the Holy Ghost to a formula  
but an impious generation is here,  
et in the light, melt down my mysteries,  
ommission the moon to serve my altars  
And make my colleagues village entertainers  
That tree of Grace, for years I have tended,  
Is a slow-grower, not to be transplanted,  
They'll cut it down for pit-props,  
That harvest of Faith, not without blood ripened,  
They have ploughed in, their dynamos chant  
Canticles of a new power my holy land is blasted,  
The crust crumbles, the veins run vinegar.



## I 2

Oh subterranean fires, break out!  
Tornadoes, pity not  
The petty bourgeois of the soul,  
The middleman of God!

Who ruins farm and factory  
To keep a private mansion  
Is a bad landlord, he shall get  
No honourable mention

Who mobbed the kestrel out of the air,  
Who made the tiger tame,  
Who lost the blood's inheritance  
And found the body's shame,

Who raised his hands to brand a Cain  
And bless a submarine—  
Time is up the medicine-man  
Must take his medicine.

The winter evening holds her peace  
And makes a crystal pause,  
Frozen are all the streams of light,  
Silent about their source

Comrade, let us look to earth,  
Be stubborn, act and sleep.  
Here at our feet the lasting skull  
Keeps a stiff upper lip

Feeling the weight of a long winter,  
Grimaces underground,  
But never again will need to ask  
Why spirit was flesh-bound.

And we whom winter days oppress  
May find some work to hand,  
Perfect our plans, renew parts,  
Break hedges down, plough land

So when primroses pave the way  
And the sun warms the stone,  
We may receive the exile spirit  
Coming into its own

## 13

*Fourth Defendant speaks*

To sit at head of one's own table,  
To overlook a warm familiar landscape,  
Have large cupboards for small responsibilities—  
Surely that does outweigh  
The rent veil and the agonies to follow?  
Me the Almighty fixed, from Eve fallen,  
Heart-deep in earth, a pointer to star fields,  
Suffering sapflow, fruitage, early barrenness,  
Changeable reputed, but to change constant,  
Fickle of fashion no more than the months are;  
Daily depend on surroundings for sustenance,  
On what my roots reach, what my leaves inhale here.  
Grant me a rich ground, wrapped in airs temperate,  
Not where nor'-easters threaten the flint scarps,  
Consequence then shall I have, men's admiration  
Now, and my bones shall be fuel for the future

Yet have I always failed  
For he, who should have been my prime possession,  
Was not to be possessed  
I leant o'er him, a firmament of shadow,  
But he looked up through me and saw the stars  
I would have bound him in the earth-ways,  
Fluid, immediate, the child of nature  
But he made bricks of earth, iron from fire,  
Turned waves to power, winds to communication,  
Setting up Art against Chaos, subjecting  
My flux to the synthetic frost of reason  
I am left with a prone man,  
Virtue gone out of him, who in the morning  
Will rise to join Crusades or assist the Harlequins  
Though I persuade him that his stars are mine eyes'  
Refraction, that wisdom's best expressed in  
The passive mood,—here's no change for the better:  
I was the body slave, am now the spirit's  
Come, let me contemplate my own  
Mysteries, a dark glass may save my face

## I 4

Live you by love confined,  
There is no nearer nearness,  
Break not his light bounds,  
The stars' and seas' harness  
There is nothing beyond,  
We have found the land's end  
We'll take no mortal wound  
Who felt him in the furnace,  
Drowned in his fierceness,  
By his midsummer browned

Nor ever lose awareness  
Of nearness and farness  
Who've stood at earth's heart careless  
Of suns and storms around,  
Who have leant on the hedge of the wind,  
On the last ledge of darkness

We are where love has come  
To live he is that river  
Which flows and is the same,  
He is not the famous deceiver  
Nor early-flowering dream  
Content you Be at home  
In me There's but one room  
Of all the house you may never  
Share, deny or enter  
There, as a candle's beam  
Stands firm and will not waver  
Spire-straight in a close chamber,  
As though in shadowy cave a  
Stalagmite of flame,  
The integral spirit climbs  
The dark in light for ever.

## 15

Consider. These are they  
Who have a stake in earth  
But risk no wing on air,  
Walk not a planet path.

Theirs the reward of all  
That live by sap alone,

Flourishing but to show  
Which way the wind has gone

While oaks of pedigree  
Stand over a rich seam,  
Another sinks the shaft,  
Fills furnace, gets up steam

These never would break through  
The orbit of their year,  
Admit no altered stress,  
Decline a change of gear

The tree grips soil, the bird  
Knows how to use the wind,  
But the full man must live  
Rooted yet unconfined



## PART THREE

Never yield before the barren

D H LAWRENCE

## 16

LOOK west, Wystan, lone flyer, birdman, my bully boy!  
 Plague of locusts, creeping barrage, has left earth bare  
 Suckling and centenarian are up in air,  
 No wing-room for Wystan, no joke for kestrel joy

Sky-scrappers put high questions that quench the wind's  
 breath,  
 Whose shadow still comes short of truth, but kills the grass  
 Power-house chimneys choke sun, ascetic pylons pass  
 Bringing light to the dark-livers, charged to deal death.

Firework fêtes, love displays, levitation of dead,  
 Salvation writ in smoke will reassure the town,  
 While comfy in captive balloons easily brought down  
 Sit frail philosophers, gravity gone to the head

Gain altitude, Auden, then let the base beware!  
 Migrate, chaste my kestrel, you need a change of air!

## 17

*First Enemy speaks*

Begin perhaps with jokes across the table,  
 Bathing before breakfast, undressing frankly,  
 Trials of strength, innocent invasions,  
 Concealing velvet hand in iron grip  
 Play the man, let woman wait indoors.  
*I do like doing things with you.*

Shoot home the bolt, draw close the silken cordon  
 Regrets for youth, malice at mutual friends,



Excluding company with a private smile,  
Longer looks noting, change of tune Ah, now  
To find one's touch, anticipate the last movement!  
*You are so different from the others*

This is my act, who can play Cleopatra,  
Can hear state secrets, see the guarded plans  
A man my empire, darling I proclaim  
Through sultry eyes dominion appetites—  
To be called a queen, be a subject for sonnets  
*You can't really think me beautiful?*

Then set the stage, lights for a final tableau—  
I never shall love the dark since Maurice died—  
Buzzards are wheeling above, horns blowing around,  
We come to a point, circle the trembling prey  
In sunny fern or many-mirrored bedroom  
*I love to watch your face*

Now am I in the very lists of love,  
Clutching the terminals may surely hope  
To make a contact Feel, body, Oh fail not!  
Shall the harsh friction the gritted teeth of lust  
Not generate a spark, bring me to life?  
*I've never felt like this before*

So, so again And he that was alive  
Is dead Or sleeps A stranger to these parts  
Nerve insulated, flesh unfused, this is  
No consummation, yet a dear achievement  
Reach for the powder-puff, I have sinned greatly  
*I suppose you hate me, now*

## I

Not hate nor love, but say  
Refreshment after rain,  
A lucid hour, though this  
Need not occur again

You shall no further feast  
Your pride upon my flesh  
Cry for the moon here's but  
An instantaneous flash

My wells, my rooted good  
Go deeper than you dare  
Seek not my sun and moon,  
They are centred elsewhere

I know a fairer land,  
Whose furrows are of fire,  
Whose hills are a pure metal  
Shining for all to share

And there all rivers run  
To magnify the sea,  
Whose waves recur for ever  
In calm equality

Hands off! The dykes are down  
This is no time for play  
Hammer is poised and sickle  
Sharpened I cannot stay.

## 19

*Second Enemy speaks*

Now sir, now madam, we're all plain people here,  
Used to plain speaking we know what is what,  
How to stretch a point and where to draw the line

You want to buy I have the goods

Read about rector's girls

Duke's disease synthetic pearls

Latest sinners tasty dinners

Plucky dogs shot Sinn Feiners

Flood in China rape in Wales

Murderer's tears scenes at sales

That's the stuff aren't you thrilled

Sit back and see the world

Yet, though abiding by the law and the profits,

I have a solemn duty and shall not shirk it

Who stand *in loco parentis* to the British Public,

We must educate our bastards

Professor Jeans spills the beans

Dean Inge tells you a thing

A man in a gown gives you the low-down

A man with a beard says something weird

Famous whore anticipates war

Woman mayor advises prayer

A grey-haired gugga says leave it to mother

Run off and play no more lessons to-day.

And thirdly, brethren, you must be saved from yourselves,

From that secret voice, that positive contagion

I'll have no long faces on this ship while I'm captain

And you know what happens to mutineers

Is the boss unkind? Have you dropped a stitch?

Smile! All together! You'll soon be better  
Have you got a grouch? Do you feel an itch?  
There, there! Sit down and write uncle a letter  
Lock the front door, here are your slippers,  
Get out your toys and don't make a noise,  
Don't tease the keepers, eat up your kippers,  
And you'll have a treat one day if you're good boys

## 20

Fireman and farmer, father and flapper,  
I'm speaking to you, sir, please drop that paper,  
Don't you know it's poison? Have you lost all hope?  
Aren't you ashamed, ma'am, to be taking dope?  
There's a nasty habit that starts in the head  
And creeps through the veins till you go all dead  
Insured against accident? But that won't prove  
Much use when one morning you find you can't move

They tell you all's well with our lovely England  
And God's in our capital Isn't it grand  
Where the offal of action, the rinsings of thought  
From a stunted peer for a penny can be bought?  
It seems a bargain, but in the long run  
Will cost you your honour, your crops and your son  
They're selling you the dummy, for God's sake don't buy  
it!  
Baby, that bottle's not clean, don't try it!

You remember that girl who turned the gas on—  
They drove her to it, they couldn't let her alone  
That young inventor—you all know his name—  
They used the plans and he died of their fame.

Careful, climber, they're getting at your nerve!  
Leader, that's a bribe, they'd like you to serve!  
Bull, I don't want to give you a nightmare,  
But, keep still a moment, are you quite sure you're there?

As for you, Bimbo, take off that false face!  
You've ceased to be funny, you're in disgrace  
We can see the spy through that painted grin,  
You may talk patriotic but you can't take us in.  
You've poisoned the reservoirs, released your germs  
On firesides, on foundries, on tubes and on farms  
You've made yourself cheap with your itch for power  
Infecting all comers, a hopeless whore

Scavenger barons and your jackal vassals,  
Your pimping press-gang, your unclean vessels,  
We'll make you swallow your words at a gulp  
And turn you back to your element, pulp.  
Don't bluster, Bimbo, it won't do you any good,  
We can be much ruder and we're learning to shoot.  
Closet Napoleon, you'd better abdicate,  
You'd better quit the country before it's too late.

## 2 I

*Third Enemy speaks*

God is a proposition,  
And we that prove him are his priests, his chosen.  
From bare hypothesis  
Of strata and wind, of stars and tides, watch me  
Construct his universe,  
A working model of my majestic notions,  
A sum done in the head.

Last week I measured the light, his little finger,  
The rest is a matter of time

God is an electrician,  
And they that worship him must worship him  
In ampere and in volt  
Scrap sun and moon, your twilight of false gods  
X is not here or there,  
Whose lightning scrawls brief cryptograms on sky,  
Easy for us to solve,  
Whose motions fit our formulæ, whose temple  
Is a pure apparatus

God is a statistician  
Offer him all the data, tell him your dreams  
What is your lucky number?  
How do you react to bombs? Have you a rival?  
Do you really love your wife?  
Get yourself taped Put soul upon the table  
Switch on the arc-lights, watch  
Heart's beat, the secret agents of the blood  
Let every cell be observed

God is a Good Physician,  
Gives fruit for hygiene, crops for calories.  
Don't touch that dirty man,  
Don't drink from the same cup, sleep in one bed  
You know He would not like it  
Young men, cut out those visions, they're bad for the eyes  
I'll show you face to face  
Eugenics, Eupeptics and Euthanasia,  
The clinic Trinity

## 22

Where is he, where? How the man stares!  
Do you think he is there, buttoned up in your stars?  
Put by that telescope,  
You can't bring him nearer, you can't, sir, you haven't a hope.  
Is he the answer to your glib equations,  
The lord of light, the destroyer of nations?  
To be seen on a slide, to be caught on a filter? The Cause  
Limed in his own laws?  
Analyst, you've missed him Or worse and worst  
You've got him inside? You must feel fit to burst  
Here, there, everywhere  
Or nowhere At least you know where And how much do  
you care?

Where then, Oh where? In earth or in air?  
The master of mirth, the corrector of care?  
Nightingale knows, if any,  
And poplar flowing with wind, and high on the sunny  
Hill you may find him, and low on the lawn  
When every dew-drop is a separate dawn  
In the moment before the bombardment, poised at peace  
He hides And whoever sees  
The cloud on the sky-line, the end of grief,  
Dust in the distance that spells a relief,  
Has found Shall have his share  
Who naked emerges on the far side of despair

This one shall hear, though from afar,  
The clear first call of new life, through fear  
Piercing and padded walls  
Shall arise, shall scatter his heirlooms, shall run till he falls

That one is slower, shall know by growing,  
Not aware of his hour, but suddenly blowing  
With leaves and roses, living from springs of the blood  
These ones have found their good  
Facing the rifles in a blind alley  
Or stepping through ruins to sound reveille  
They feel the father here,  
They have him at heart, they shake hands, they know he is  
near

## 23

*Fourth Enemy speaks*

I'm a dreamer, so are you  
See the pink sierras call,  
The ever-ever land of dew,  
Magic basements, fairy coal  
There the youngest son wins through,  
Wee Willie can thrash the bully,  
Living's cheap and dreams come true,  
Lying manna tempts the belly,  
Crowns are many, claims are few

Come along then, come away  
From the rush hour, from the town  
Blair and overcast to-day  
Would put a blackcap out of tune,  
Spoil the peacock's June display  
Rigid time of driving-belts  
Gives no rest for grace-notes gay  
Fear and fever, cables, bolts  
Pin the soul, allow no play



You're a poet, so am I  
No man's keeper, intimate  
Of breeding earth and brooding sky,  
Irresponsible, remote,  
A cool cloud, creation's eye  
Seek not to turn the winter tide  
But to temperate deserts fly  
Close chain-mail of solitude  
Must protect you or you die

Come away then, let us go,  
Lose identity and pass  
Through the still blockade of snow,  
Fear's frontier, an age of ice  
Pierce the crust and pass below  
Towards a red volcanic core,  
The warm womb where flesh can grow  
Again and passion sleep secure  
In creative ebb and flow

## 24

Tempt me no more, for I  
Have known the lightning's hour,  
The poet's inward pride,  
The certainty of power

Bayonets are closing round  
I shrink, yet I must wring  
A living from despair  
And out of steel a song

Though song, though breath be short,  
I'll share not the disgrace  
Of those that ran away  
Or never left the base

Comrades, my tongue can speak  
No comfortable words,  
Calls to a forlorn hope,  
Gives work and not rewards

Oh keep the sickle sharp  
And follow still the plough  
Others may reap, though some  
See not the winter through

Father, who endest all,  
Pity our broken sleep,  
For we lie down with tears  
And waken but to weep.

And if our blood alone  
Will melt this iron earth,  
Take it It is well spent  
Easing a saviour's birth

## 25

Consider these, for we have condemned them,  
Leaders to no sure land, guides their bearings lost  
Or in league with robbers have reversed the signposts,  
Disrespectful to ancestors, irresponsible to heirs.

Born barren, a freak growth, root in rubble,  
Fruitlessly blossoming, whose foliage suffocates,  
Their sap is sluggish, they reject the sun.

The man with his tongue in his cheek, the woman  
With her heart in the wrong place, unhandsome, unwhole-  
some,

Have exposed the new-born to worse than weather,  
Exiled the honest and sacked the seer  
These drowned the farms to form a pleasure-lake,  
In time of drought they drain the reservoir  
Through private pipes for baths and sprinklers.

Getters not begetters, gainers not beginners,  
Whiners, no winners, no triers, betrayers,  
Who steer by no star, whose moon means nothing  
Daily denying, unable to dig  
At bay in villas from blood relations,  
Counters of spoons and content with cushions  
They pray for peace, they hand down disaster

They that take the bribe shall perish by the bribe,  
Dying of dry rot, ending in asylums,  
A curse to children, a charge on the state  
But still their fears and frenzies infect us,  
Drug nor isolation will cure this cancer  
It is now or never, the hour of the knife,  
The break with the past, the major operation



## PART FOUR

He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo

GERARD ANLEY HOPKINS

JUNCTION or terminus—here we alight  
A myriad tracks converge on this moment,  
This man where all ages and men are married,  
Who shall right him? Who shall determine?

Standing astonished at the close of day  
We know the worst, we may guess at good  
Geared too high our power was wasted,  
Who have lost the old way to the happy ending

A world behind us the west is in flames,  
Devastated areas, works at a standstill,  
No seed awakes, wary is no hunter,  
The tame are ruined and the wild have fled

Where then the saviour, the stop of illness?  
Hidden the mountain was to steel our hearts  
Is healing here? An untrodden territory  
Promises no coolness, invites but the brave

But see! Not far, not fiction, a real one,  
Vibrates like heat-haze full in the sun's face  
Filling the heart, that chaste and fleet one,  
Rarely my kestrel, my lucky star

O man perplexed, here is your answer  
Alone who soars, who feeds upon earth—  
Him shall you heed and learn where joy is  
The dance of action, the expert eye

Now is your moment, O hang-fire heart,  
The ice is breaking, the death-grip relaxes,  
Luck's turned. Submit to your star and take  
Command, Oh start the attacking movement!

## 27

Wystan, Rex, all of you that have not fled,  
This is our world, this is where we have grown  
Together in flesh and live, though each alone  
Shall join the enclosed order of the dead,  
Enter the silent brotherhood of bone

All you that have a cool head and safe hands  
Awaken early, there is much to do,  
Hedges to raze, channels to clear, a true  
Reckoning to find The other side commands  
Eternity We have an hour or two

Let us speak first against that ancient firm  
Who sell an armament to any cause,  
Fear and Pain brothers call them bullies and curs  
Who take us into corners and make us squirm,  
Finding the weak spot, fumbling at secret doors

Let us tell them plainly now they haven't a chance,  
We are going about together, we've mingled blood,  
Taken a tonic that's set us up for good,  
Their disguises are tabled, their movements known in advance,  
We have found out who hides them and gives them food

Lipcurl, Swiveleye, Bluster, Crock and Queer,  
Mister I'll-think-it-over, Miss Not-to-day,  
Young Who-the-hell-cares and old Let-us-pray,  
Sir Après-moi-le-déluge It is here  
They get their orders These will have to pay.

Hear, the ice-wall of winter at our back,  
Spring's first explosions throbbing across the plain,  
Earth's diastole, flood-tide of heart and vein  
Collect your forces for a counter-attack,  
New life is on the way, the relief train

## 2

Though winter's barricade delays,  
Another season's in the air,  
We'll sow the spring in our young days,  
Found a Virginia everywhere.

Look where the ranks of crocuses  
Their rebel colours will display  
Coming with quick fire to redress  
The balance of a wintry day

Those daffodils that from the mould  
Drawing a sweet breath soon shall flower,  
With a year's labour get their gold  
To spend it on a sunny hour.

They from earth's centre take their time  
And from the sun what love they need  
The proud flower burns away its prime,  
Eternity lies in the seed.

Follow the kestrel, south or north,  
Strict eye, spontaneous wing can tell  
A secret Where he comes to earth  
Is the heart's treasure Mark it well



Here he hovers You're on the scent,  
Magnetic mountain is not far,  
Across no gulf or continent,  
Not where you think but where you are

Stake out your claim Go downwards Bore  
Through the tough crust Oh learn to feel  
A way in darkness to good ore  
You are the magnet and the steel

Out of that dark a new world flowers  
There in the womb, in the rich veins  
Are tools, dynamos, bridges, towers,  
Your tractors and your travelling-cranes

## 29

But winter still rides rough-shod upon us,  
Summer comes not for wishing nor warmth at will  
Passes are blocked and glaciers pen us  
Round the hearth huddled, hoping for a break,  
Playing at patience, reporting ill  
Aware of changed temperature one shall wake  
And rushing to window arouse companions  
To feel frost surrender, an ice age finished,  
Whose strength shall melt from the mountains and run  
Riot, careering down corries and canyons  
What floods will rise then through rivers replenished,  
Embankments broken, and bluffs undone,  
Laid low old follies, all landmarks vanished  
Is it ready for launching, the Argo, the Ark,  
Our transport, our buoyant one, our heart of oak?

Make haste, put through the emergency order  
For an overtime day, for double shifts working  
Weather is breaking, to-morrow we must board her,  
Cast off onto chaos and shape a course  
Many months have gone to her making,  
Wood well-seasoned for watertight doors,  
The old world's best in her ribs and ballast,  
White-heat, high pressure, the heart of a new  
In boiler, in gadget, in gauge, in screw  
Peerless on water, Oh proud our palace,  
A home for heroes, the latest of her line,  
A beater to windward, obedient to rudder,  
A steamer into storm, a hurricane-rider,  
Foam-stepper, star-steerer, freighter and fighter—  
Name her, release her, anoint her with wine!

Whom shall we take with us? The true, the tested,  
Floods over to find a new world and man it,  
Sure-foot, Surveyor, Spark and Strong,  
Those whom winter has wasted, not worsted,  
Good at their jobs for a break-down gang  
Born haters will blast through debris or granite,  
Willing work on the permanent ways,  
And natural lovers repair the race  
As needle to north, as wheel in wheel turning,  
Men shall know their masters and women their need,  
Mating and submitting, not dividing and defying,  
Force shall fertilise, mass shall breed  
Broad let our valleys embrace the morning  
And satisfied see a good day dying,  
Accepting the shadows, sure of seed

## 30

You who would come with us,  
Think what you stand to lose—  
An assured income, the will  
In your favour and the feel  
Of firmness underfoot  
For travellers by this boat  
Nothing to rest the eyes on  
But a migrant's horizon,  
No fixtures or bric-à-brac—  
Wave walls without a break  
Old acquaintance on the quay  
Have come to clutch your knee—  
Merry-Andrew and Cassandra,  
Squeamish, Sponge and Squanderer,  
The Insurance Agent, the Vicar,  
Hard Cheese the Confidence-Tricker,  
Private Loot, General Pride,  
And Lust the sultry-eyed  
Others you hate to leave  
Wave with autumnal grief,  
The best of what has been,  
Props of an English scene,  
A day we may not recover,  
A camp you must quit for ever

Now, if you will, retract  
For we are off to act  
Activity of young  
And cut the ravelled string

Calm yourselves, you that seek  
The flame, and whose flesh is weak  
Must keep it in cold storage  
For we shall not encourage  
The would-be hero, the nervous  
Martyr to rule or serve us  
Stand forward for volunteers  
Who have tempered their loves and fears  
In the skilled process of time,  
Whose spirit is blown to a flame  
That leaves no mean alloys  
You who have heard a voice—  
The siren in the morning  
That gives the worker warning,  
The whisper from the loam  
Promising life to come,  
Manifesto of peace  
Read in an altered face—  
Who have heard, and believe it true  
That new life must break through

## 3 I

In happier times  
When the heart is whole and the exile king returned  
We may sing shock of opposing teams  
And electric storms of love again

Our voices may be tuned  
To solo flight, to record-breaking plane,  
Looking down from hill  
We may follow with fresh felicities

Wilful the light, the wayward motion of trees,  
In happier times when the heart is whole

In happier times  
When the land is ours, these springs shall irrigate  
Good growing soil until it teems,  
Redeemed from mortgage, drilled to obey,  
But still must flow in spate  
We'll focus stars again, though now must be  
Map and binoculars  
Outlining vision, bringing close  
Natural features that will need no glass  
In happier times, when the land is ours

Make us a wind  
To shake the world out of this sleepy sickness  
Where flesh has dwindled and brightness waned!  
New life multiple in seed and cell  
Mounts up to brace our slackness  
Oppression's passion, a full organ swell  
Through our throats welling wild  
Of angers in unison arise  
And hunger haunted with a million sighs,  
Make us a wind to shake the world!

Make us the wind  
From a new world that springs and gathers force,  
Clearing the air, cleaning the wound,  
Sets masses in motion and whips the blood  
Oh they shall find him fierce  
Who cling to relics, dead wood shall feel his blade.  
Rudely the last leaves whirled,

A storm on fire, dry ghosts, shall go in  
Fear and be laid in the red of their own ruin  
Make us the wind from a new world!

## 32

You that love England, who have an ear for her music,  
The slow movement of clouds in benediction,  
Clear arias of light thrilling over her uplands,  
Over the chords of summer sustained peacefully,  
Ceaseless the leaves' counterpoint in a west wind lively,  
Blossom and river rippling loveliest allegro,  
And the storms of wood strings brass at year's finale  
Listen Can you not hear the entrance of a new theme?

You who go out alone, on tandem or on pillion,  
Down arterial roads riding in April,  
Or sad beside lakes where hill-slopes are reflected  
Making fires of leaves, your high hopes fallen  
Cyclists and hikers in company, day excursionists,  
Refugees from cursed towns and devastated areas,  
Know you seek a new world, a saviour to establish  
Long-lost kinship and restore the blood's fulfilment

You who like peace, good sticks, happy in a small way  
Watching birds or playing cricket with schoolboys,  
Who pay for drinks all round, whom disaster chose not,  
Yet passing derelict mills and barns roof-rent  
Where despair has burnt itself out—hearts at a standstill,  
Who suffer loss, aware of lowered vitality,  
We can tell you a secret, offer a tonic, only  
Submit to the visiting angel, the strange new healer.

You above all who have come to the far end, victims  
Of a run-down machine, who can bear it no longer,  
Whether in easy chairs chafing at impotence  
Or against hunger, bullies and spies preserving  
The nerve for action, the spark of indignation—  
Need fight in the dark no more, you know your enemies  
You shall be leaders when zero hour is signalled,  
Wielders of power and welders of a new world  
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## 33

Come for a walk in our pleasant land  
We must wake up early if we want to understand  
The length and breadth and depth of decay  
Has corrupted our vowels and clogged our bowels,  
Impaired our breathing, eaten pride away  
What do they believe in—these yellow yes-men,  
Pansies, politicians, prelates and pressmen,  
Boneless wonders, unburstable bouncers,  
Back-slappers, cheer-leaders, bribed announcers  
Broadcasting All-Clear as the raiders draw near,  
Would mend a burst dam with sticking-plaster  
And hide with shocked hand the yawn of disaster—  
What do they believe in? A god of gold,  
A gilt-edged proposition, but it seems they've been sold  
All you fine ladies, once you were flowers  
England was proud of, rich blooms, good growers,  
But overblown now, and we can't afford you  
Your missions and fashions, your synthetic passions,  
We don't want to bed you and we'd rather not board you  
Weedy, greedy, unsatisfied, unsexed,  
You're not living in this world, and as for the next—

You could hand white feathers on the judgment day  
And give the damned a charity matinée  
Our holy intellectuals—what are they at?  
Filling in hard times with literary chat,  
Laying down the law where no one listens,  
Finding the flaw in long-scraped systems  
And short cuts to places no more on the map  
Though off their feed now and inclined to mope  
Nasties, nudists, bedlamites, buddhists,  
Too feeble to follow, unable to guide,  
It's time we asked them to step aside.  
Children of the sahib, the flag and the mater,  
Grim on golf-courses and haggard on horses  
They try to live but they've ceased to matter  
Who'll give a penny to the poor old guy?  
These were the best that money could buy  
And it isn't good enough For what can they fight?—  
The silver spoon, the touched hat, the expensive seat  
Marching at the orders of a mad physician  
Down private roads to common perdition  
Where is the bourgeois, the backbone of our race?  
Bent double with lackeying, the joints out of place,  
Behind bluffs and lucky charms hiding to evade  
An overdue audit, anæmic, afraid  
Trimmers and schemers, pusillanimous dreamers,  
At cinemas, shop-windows and arenas we've found them  
Bearing witness to a life beyond them  
They're paying for death on the instalment plan  
Who hoped to go higher and failed to be men  
We'd like to fight but we fear defeat,  
We'd like to work but we're feeling too weak,  
We'd like to be sick but we'd get the sack,



We'd like to behave, we'd like to believe,  
We'd like to love, but we've lost the knack

## 34

(FOR FRANCES WARNER)

What do we ask for, then?  
Not for pity's pence nor pursy affluence,  
Only to set up house again  
Neither a coward's heaven, cessation of pain,  
Nor a new world of sense,  
But that we may be given the chance to be men  
For what, then, do we hope?  
Not longer sight at once but enlarged scope,  
Miraculous no seed or growth of soul, but soil  
Cleared of weed, prepared for good  
We shall expect no birth-hour without blood  
Nor fire without recoil.

Publish the vision, broadcast and screen it,  
Of a world where the will of all shall be raised to highest  
power,  
Village or factory shall form the unit  
Control shall be from the centres, quick brain, warm heart,  
And the bearings bathed in a pure  
Fluid of sympathy There possessions no more shall be part  
Of the man, where riches and sacrifice  
Are of flesh and blood, sex, muscles, limbs and eyes  
Each shall give of his best It shall seem proper  
For all to share what all produced  
Men shall be glad of company, love shall be more than a  
guest  
And the bond no more of paper

Open your eyes, for vision  
Is here of a world that has ceased to be bought and sold  
With traitor silver and fairy gold,  
But the diamond of endurance, the wrought-iron of passion  
Is all their currency  
As the body that knows through action they are splendid,  
Feeling head and heart agree,  
Young men proud of their output, women no longer stale  
With deferred crisis, the old, a full day ended,  
Able to stand down and sit still  
Only the exploiter, the public nuisance, the quitter  
Receive no quarter.

Here they do not need  
To flee the birthplace There's room for growing and work-  
ing  
Bright of eye, champions for speed,  
They sing their own songs, they are active, they play not  
watch  
Happy at night talking  
Of the demon bowler cracked over the elm-trees,  
The reverse pass that won the match  
At festivals knowing themselves normal and well-born  
They remember the ancestors that gave them ease,  
Harris who fought the bully at Melbourne,  
What Wainwright wrote with his blood, Rosa in prison—  
All who sucked out the poison

## 35

In these our winter days  
Death's iron tongue is glib

Numbing with fear all flesh upon  
A fiery-hearted globe

An age once green is buried,  
Numbered the hours of light,  
Blood-red across the snow our sun  
Still trails his faint retreat

• Spring through death's iron guard  
Her million blades shall thrust,  
Love that was sleeping, not extinct,  
Throw off the nightmare crust

Eyes, though not ours, shall see  
Sky-high a signal flame,  
The sun returned to power above  
A world, but not the same

## 36

Now raise your voices for a final chorus,  
Lift the glasses, drink to-morrow's health—  
Success to the doctor who is going to cure us  
And those who will die no more in bearing wealth  
On our magnetic mountain a beacon burning  
Shall sign the peace we hoped for, soon or late,  
Clear over a clean earth, and all men turning  
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light

Drink to the ordered nerves, the sight restored,  
A day when power for all shall radiate  
From the sovereign centres, and the blood is stirred  
To flow in its ancient courses of love and hate

When the country vision is ours that like a barn  
Fills the heart with slow-matured delight,  
Absorbing wind and summer, till we turn  
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

For us to dream the birthday, but they shall act it—  
Bells over fields, the hooters from the mine,  
On New Year's Eve under the bridegroom's attic  
Chorus of coastguards singing Auld Lang Syne  
Now at hope's horizon that day is dawning,  
We guess at glory from a mountain height,  
But then in valley towns they will be turning  
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light

Beckon O beacon, and O sun be soon!  
Hollo, bells, over a melting earth!  
Let man be many and his sons all sane,  
Fearless with fellows, handsome by the hearth  
Break from your trance start dancing now in town,  
And, fences down, the ploughing match with mate  
This is your day so turn, my comrades, turn  
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light